

The Mechanic 611

Chapter 611: The Battle

After dozens of layers of buffs were cast on Ames, her fury was finally dampened. She snorted and deactivated her Esper ability.

Heber did not mind it; it was not the first time he had confronted Ames. He turned and nodded at Zoel.

“So, I shall leave. I look forward to the result of your consideration.” Zoel got the gesture, gave his contact details to Ames, smiled, and was about to turn around and walk out of the room.

Looking at the envoy’s retreating back, Han Xiao was suddenly hesitant. *Should I plant a mark on Zoel? It seems quite rewarding.*

He did not forget that this was a private meeting before the party officially started. When the party started the next day, only then would Heber introduce Zoel to all the guests. That would be the time that things started to escalate.

The Crimson Empire would not snatch the territory themselves because once they did, the Federation of Light would act, and the conflict would grow into a much bigger issue. Since this was not yet the stage to have such a large-scale conflict, the Crimson Empire was trying to bond with the Shattered Star Ring’s organizations, drawing more chess pieces to their side of the universe chessboard.

Throwing an Observer’s Mark would allow him to see what the Crimson Empire was doing backstage and how many organizations joined the Crimson Empire. This was very precious intelligence.

However, although Observer’s Mark left close to zero trails and even Ames could not notice it, there were two more Beyond Grade As present, so there was a chance that he might get noticed. Plus, the Crimson Empire’s people might have special techniques to prevent things like that.

Hmm, I’ll give it a try. Even if I get noticed, it’s not too serious a problem. He wants us to be on his side, and we’re not enemies.

A tiny tint of gray light flashed through his eyes, and an Observer’s Mark was planted on Zoel.

Ames and Heber did not notice at all.

Neither did Zoel. He left the room, and the gate covered his figure.

This time, Han Xiao suddenly realized that someone was looking at him. He turned around and saw that Austin was staring right at him.

He noticed? Han Xiao’s heart skipped a beat.

Everyone’s abilities were different. Ames and Heber could not notice, but Austin was a Mage, so he was sensitive to all kinds of energy. Despite the ripples of Void Energy being miniscule, they did not escape his senses.

However, Austin did not say anything. He just gave Han Xiao a friendly smile and looked elsewhere.

Han Xiao did not get what he meant. Anyway, not being exposed was a good thing.

“If there’s nothing else, I’m leaving.” Ames was annoyed by the sight of Heber and did not want to stay there.

“Wait.” This time, Heber spoke.

“What else?” Ames frowned.

“I heard you’ve been expanding your forces recently. We can work together,” Heber slowly said.

“Work together?” Ames gave a faint smile. “Do you think we have a very good relationship?”

“I can forget about that nonsense when you fought your way onto Planet Heber,” Heber said.

“Then keep remembering.” Ames could not be bothered to argue. She stood up from the throne, turned away, and left.

Han Xiao took along Hila and Aurora and followed her out of the room.

Austin laughed loudly. “Hahaha, Heber, she just dislikes you more and more.”

“Doesn’t matter.” Heber was not bothered.

“I thought you were going to make the marriage proposal again.”

“Forget it, she probably won’t agree this time too.” Heber shook his head.

“Seriously, you both have very tough personalities. If you want to get her, you have to tone it down,” Austin said jokingly. His personality was very casual, and he had a good relationship with both of them. He knew the history of Heber chasing Ames.

“I won’t change for any woman.” Heber waved his hands.

He was not too determined about Ames. In the entire Shattered Star Ring, Heber thought only Ames who was Beyond Grade A like him could match him, only she was strong enough to be his partner. It had no element of love or emotion.

If he could get Ames, his organization would have two Beyond Grade As, which would be a tremendous increase.

Heber disdained deception and did not bother wasting time; he had always been straight forward and did not avoid speaking of his real goal of chasing Ames.

Austin still remembered back then when Heber first proposed to Ames and how furious Ames had been. He wanted to laugh every time he thought of it.

...

When Han Xiao and the others reached the gate of the palace, Carroll just happened to be on the way in, and they met.

“You people again.”

Carroll did not have any intention of taunting this time and did not glue his eyes to Ames, unlike last time. His expression was calm as if Han Xiao and the others were just passersby.

Ames glanced at him. Although she was unhappy, she could not do anything in Tyrant's territory, so she ignored Carroll.

Just as they were about to pass each other by, Han Xiao suddenly pressed onto Carroll's shoulder and grabbed him tightly like an iron claw.

Puzzled, Carroll turned around and asked, "What are you doing?"

"I remember that you said before I'm just your replacement?" Han Xiao squinted. "Since you call yourself my senior, give me some guidance then."

Carroll's expression changed. He had thought that the previous taunting incident was over, but Han Xiao's sudden action after a few days was unexpected to him.

Ames stopped, also surprised.

"What do you mean? Do you want to fight here? This is Planet Heber!" Carroll said in a slightly threatening manner.

"Don't worry, I just want to spar with you. I want to see how strong the traitor is." Han Xiao chuckled. "The Tyrant's subordinate wouldn't not dare accept a challenge, right?"

"I got it. This is Ames' orders, isn't it?" Carroll felt that he had guessed correctly. It had to be because Ames was unhappy about the outcome of what had happened earlier, so she had ordered Black Star to challenge him. If it was just a spar between officers, Heber would not say anything.

Hehe, is she this confident in this new officer of hers?

Carroll's face turned cold and said, "Okay, I accept your challenge. Hope you don't lose too fast."

Bloodshed Land was his stage; he could use countless machines. Even if Black Star's name had been loud recently, he did not step back.

Carroll had heard about Ames' new officer. He also wanted to gauge Han Xiao's full strength. He wanted to see what kind of person Ames had found to replace him.

Furthermore, his position was sensitive. He now represented the Tyrant. Since Ames had ordered Black Star to challenge him, he could not back down. Even though Heber could protect him, considering the Tyrant's personality, things would not go well for him if he was afraid of the challenge.

Bloodshed Land despised cowards the most. Someone that was not a battle maniac had no chance of obtaining a high position under the Tyrant.

Han Xiao curled his lips and suddenly said, "We're both Mechanics, just sparring isn't fun. How about a bet?"

"On what?"

“Let’s bet... five sets of machinery blueprints, what do you say? The loser has to give whatever blueprint the winner requests.” Han Xiao smiled wickedly.

Betting blueprints... Carroll frowned heavily. Blueprints were the lifeline of a Mechanic, so Mechanics betting blueprints on was not uncommon.

“Okay.” Carroll nodded.

Han Xiao’s eyes sparkled.

There were many factors that had made him suddenly challenge Carroll.

Ames could not battle, but he could. Being high profile to a certain extent and showcasing his abilities was beneficial to increasing his position in this circle. Plus, it could help Ames relieve some anger.

If the Tyrant interfered in a spar between officers, it would be utterly embarrassing.

Secondly, he had been peeking on Carroll for the past few days and roughly knew his strength. Knowing the enemy guaranteed him an edge in the battle. Furthermore, he had noticed that Carroll had a few rather good machines, so he had proposed a bet to win some machinery blueprints.

He would never fight a battle without benefits.

The third and the most important reason was that a new faction mission had appeared on his interface.

[Ames’ Fury]

Mission Introduction: The traitor’s provocation and the Tyrant’s disrespect have made Ames enraged. As a member of Floating Dragon, you know what you need to do.

Mission Requirements: Defeat Carroll publicly.

Reward: 15,000,000 Experience. +2500 Floating Dragon Faction Favorability, +30 Ames Favorability, +2 Heber Favorability, +15 Renown.

Failure Punishment: -20 Ames Favorability, -5 Heber Favorability.

Remarks: Different mission results will result in different effects.

Chapter 612: Resource Battle?

“Here will do.” Carroll brought the others to Bloodshed Land’s Open Air Combat Training Ground No. 30 and stood opposite Han Xiao. He then moved a long distance away till Han Xiao became a small dot in his eyes.

Han Xiao looked around. This training ground was empty and unobstructed. Around its edges were tall mechanical towers connected by dozens of blue, high-temperature electromagnetic wires. It looked like a futuristic baseball field but many times larger.

The floor was made of gray metal plates. Burn marks left by explosions and slash marks could be seen all around the place, some pits too. Clearly, this training ground was often used.

“In my territory, you have to follow my rules.” Carroll’s voice came from afar. “First, the battle area is limited to this training ground. If you cause destruction outside of this, you’ll bear the consequences. Second, causing severe damage to the opponent is not allowed. So, don’t worry, your life won’t be in danger.”

As Carroll spoke, he activated the training ground. The floor trembled. Pits appeared from the metal floor, and mechanical soldiers rose up one after another, surrounding Carroll.

Hum!

The mechanical towers at the edge of the training ground vibrated. A beam of light shot out from their peaks, gathering on top, forming a projection of a three-minute timer.

Carroll smirked and said, “Don’t say I’m bullying you. Before we start, you have three minutes to prepare. After three minutes, this place will be covered by a protective shield.”

Black Star was a guest. He would not have brought too many combat machines, and they would most probably be stored in his ship. By giving him three minutes to get the machines, after the shield covered the place, Black Star would be unable to receive external support and would only be able to fight with the machines in the venue.

As for Carroll, he had a continuous supply of armies because Combat Training Ground No. 30 was a facility that released machines from below to let people train with them. Many routes used to transport mechanical soldiers were hidden under the metal plates on the floor, connected to the logistics warehouse underground. This meant that even with the protective shield, Carroll could obtain a nonstop supply of backup.

Carroll knew that a battle between two Mechanics would most likely become a battle of resources. Black Star had limited resources while he had infinite, so he was already undefeated.

The protective shield was transparent. It was a perfect opportunity for him to publicly shame Black Star.

He could basically foresee the ending of the battle—Black Star’s machines would be used up, scraps would be everywhere, Black Star himself would be surrounded by his army, and he could look down on Black Star from a high spot casually, making Black Star admit his defeat.

Ames wanted to let her subordinate vent her anger, so defeating her subordinate would make her even more embarrassed.

Furthermore, he did not hide his main stage advantage. If Black Star cowered from it and cancelled the challenge, knowing it would end in his defeat, Ames would lose face as well.

One way or another, he was only going to benefit from it.

Carroll smiled confidently.

On the other side, Han Xiao was not surprised by Carroll’s main stage advantage at all. He contacted Risda and told him to bring the Blacklight Stealth over, airdropping his Army Boxes.

Ames was still standing by him. "Black Star, are you confident?"

"A little," Han Xiao replied casually.

"Then, I shall trust you."

Ames' tone was gentle like the wind. Although Han Xiao challenging Carroll to a battle surprised her, it was clear that Han Xiao was doing it for her. She was happy for some reason.

She had always placed a lot of trust in Han Xiao, and this was no exception. She patted Han Xiao's shoulders and took Hila and Aurora out of the place. They went up the tall building beside the training ground and watched the fight from above.

Around the training ground, there were people climbing up the buildings to watch the fight every minute. There were hundreds of them, all Bloodshed Land officers or elite soldiers. Malekith and a few other Vanguard Officials were among them. They formed small groups and chatted.

The fight between Carroll and Black Star was not kept secret; the message very quickly got passed to the officers. They all came to the scene to watch the battle.

"Black Star is quite daring to challenge our officer in our territory," a Vanguard Official said as he looked at the two people in the venue.

"He challenged Carroll because he's Floating Dragon's traitor?"

"Must be. A few days ago, Ames was forced to hold back by His Excellency Tyrant. She's probably resentful, so she let Black Star fight for her. Hehe, it'll be embarrassing to lose." Someone looked at Ames who was also watching from afar and speculated, "Maybe Ames will stop the fight when her subordinate is in danger."

"Carroll's strength, tsk..." Malekith shook his head slightly.

The impression that the Vanguard Officials had of Carroll was very complicated. On one hand, he was a traitor. Although Tyrant was confident using him, him being a traitor still made others not want to get close to him.

On the other hand, Carroll was in charge of logistics and had almost no opportunity to fight. Unlike them, the Vanguard Officials, who were signatures of Bloodshed Land and all well known, Malekith and the others did not know Carroll's strength clearly. All they knew was that he was also Grade A.

"He has the location advantage no matter what, so he basically won't lose."

...

In the palace, Heber was still casually chatting with Austin.

This time, Austin's expression suddenly changed, and he said in a strange tone, "Tyrant, it seems that a problem is occurring in your territory."

Heber frowned, took out his communicator, pressed a few times, and got the report from his subordinates.

“Black Star challenged Carroll?”

Austin cast a spell, and space rippled. A large mirror appeared, showing the scene of the training ground.

“It seems like they’re about to fight. Aren’t you going to stop them?” Austin asked.

Heber looked at the mirror, thought for a moment, and shook his head. “Since Ames is not involved, I have no reason to stop a normal spar.”

“What if your man loses?”

“My Bloodshed Land is not one to never admit defeat.” Heber pointed at the mirror. “Keep watching.”

...

At the same time, three party guests were following a Bloodshed Land soldier and touring the place.

The Purple Crystal Civilization’s representative Ralph was walking side by side with a high-ranking Klent official and having a great chat. The relationship between Purple Crystal and Klent had always been good.

Behind them, the leader of a financial group followed. His name was Rossozzi. His business was huge and invested in both Star Clusters. He could be somewhat considered Ralph and the Klent high ranking official’s friend.

The three of them were discussing business issues, when a group of people suddenly flew over them, catching their attention.

“Where are those people going?’ Ralph asked curiously.

The soldier shook his head and said, “I don’t know. They seem to be heading toward Combat Training Ground No. 30.

Just as he was done speaking, another group of people bolted past them from above, and a dark spaceship quickly flew by.

The three of them were all knowledgeable people. They recognized that the spaceship was the Federation of Light’s Stealth Grade spaceship. Of all the guests, it seemed like only one person had a Blacklight Stealth.

Floating Dragon’s Black Star!

The Klent high ranking official was instantly interested. “Looks like something happened. Let’s go and take a look.”

Ralph shrugged and did not mind it, neither did Rossozzi.

...

When the countdown had about a minute and a half left, the Blacklight Stealth arrived above the venue. Six Army Boxes descended from above like meteors, dragging a long tail of flames.

Han Xiao raised his hand toward the sky, and a bolt of tree-shaped lightning shot up into the sky from the ground, hitting the six Army Boxes. They opened in midair, and compressed orbs fell like rain onto the floor.

Clank!

The instant they landed, the compressed orbs expanded and turned into six Mechanical Armies.

Mechanical Beast Guards Army, Strike Artillery Regiment, G-1 Steel Army Corps, G-2 Heavy Armor Riders, and Mini Cube Troops occupied the venue and surrounded Han Xiao. Han Xiao was in a sea of machines.

Twelve Elite Oathkeepers guarded Han Xiao. Their exterior armor rippled from head to toe like moving scales, carrying out a self-check.

All sorts of artilleries landed behind him or hovered in midair. Other than the regular electromagnetic artilleries and laser artilleries, there were the new lava artilleries and heat artilleries.

The number of troops is a little high.

Carroll was surprised.

Nonetheless, he was still completely confident.

Black Star's Mechanical Army only occupied a small part of the training ground, while his Mechanical Army had a much higher number and almost occupied half of the place.

And it was still increasing.

There was a round of machinery transport gates at the edge of the training ground. Standard mechanical soldiers crawled out one after another, surrounding Black Star's army.

Almost endless backup, this was where Carroll's confidence came from.

So many machines. Black Star definitely spent a lot of time and money.

Evil intentions flashed through Carroll's eyes.

If I destroy all his machines, Black Star's strength will be greatly decreased. His stock will all be gone.

The formation was complete. Since there would be a protective shield later, Han Xiao did not use Eye of God. He checked through the machines; there was around ten seconds left on the timer.

Boom!

The mechanical towers at the edges activated. A light blue shield slowly rose up and shrouded the venue. All the spectators were blocked outside.

The ceiling was hundreds of meters high. When the shield completely closed, the countdown would end.

The style, technology, and model of the machines controlled by Carroll were all clearly different from Han Xiao's. Most of them were standard disposable machines.

Buzz!

The two of them released Mechanical Force at the same time. Thunder and lightning roared. Calamity Grade Mechanics had the [Mechanical Force Field] ability, which made the Mechanical Force enhancements cover an area. The entire place was covered.

After so long, I've finally encountered a Mechanic of the same grade. Han Xiao squinted. This was his first time battling a Mechanic of his grade.

Berserk Ape wrapped around his body, and a virtual screen appeared before him, displaying the Virtual Intrusion image.

Carroll was not a Virtual Mechanic; he wore a Single Unit Mechanical Suit. Pieces of armor extended from his armor and quickly turned into a more than thirty-meter-tall heavy fortress, covering Carroll from all angles. The thick and heavy armor clearly had impressive defensive capabilities.

From the gap between the fortress, many large-caliber cannons extended out.

Carroll used the Heavy Machinery Style. Large size; heavy, thick armor; strong firepower... those were the clear specialties. This was a heavy, defensive carrier. Carroll wanted to make use of his advantage in a battle of resources, so he gave himself a hard, thick turtle shell.

He was not Han Xiao; he did not have a tough body and was most afraid of enemies rushing close. Therefore, he used a defensive strategy and planned to not even let Han Xiao touch him.

“Correct method.” Malekith and the other spectators nodded. They did not think that Carroll was a coward—this was a suitable strategy given the situation.

Just as Carroll's fortress was fully expended, the shield completely closed, and the countdown ended!

Boom!

The next instant, lasers flashed, and cannon fire roared!

The battle had erupted!

Han Xiao's Mechanical Army clashed with Carroll's!

Boom boom boom!

The armies fought intensely; the scene became chaotic.

Machines could not talk, so they fought in silence. Metal crashed against metal, creating bright sparks.

Boom!

The large-caliber cannons on Carroll's heavy fortress locked onto Han Xiao and fired. Every shot made the barrels recoil instantly. The sound of firing was like a hammer smashing onto metal.

Hu!

Huge balls of light went straight to Han Xiao, and the high temperature bent the air around them.

Just as they were about to hit Han Xiao, Watcher Instrument opened like a peacock opening its feathers. It appeared behind Han Xiao and flew in front of him, turning into force field bending shields. The attacks did not explode when hitting the shield but were diverted toward other directions.

Bang bang bang!

All the cannon fire was deflected. Some shots flew far away, hit the protective shield, and exploded; some landed on the ground, stirring up a strong wind, tearing down the mechanical soldiers of both sides in the area.

Han Xiao glanced around. He clenched his fist. Mechanical Force lightning landed on the parts on the ground. [Waste Modification] resurrected his mechanical soldiers, allowing them to continue the battle.

Seeing this, Carroll stopped attacking Han Xiao. His heavy fortress started targeting Han Xiao's Mechanical Army, wanting to quickly eliminate Black Star's army.

"It won't be so easy!" Han Xiao snorted.

Buzz!

He raised his hand. The pipe on his arm launched a string of compressed orbs. They expanded midair and turned into more than ten huge mechanical arms. The next second, these mechanical arms nano-shapeshifted, combined together, and turned into a hundred-meter-wide palm, three times bigger than Carroll's heavy fortress!

Han Xiao waved his hand. The gigantic palm slapped right down onto the top of the heavy fortress, like a palm hitting a ping pong ball.

Boom!

The wind blew away the surrounding mechanical soldiers. Even through the protective shield, Malekith and the others outside could feel it.

The metal ground cracked open from the heavy pressure, but the heavy fortress was covered by a shield and was hardly damaged.

Inside the heavy fortress, Carroll sneered. This fortress was not something ordinary but an important equipment that he had made; it could block Calamity Grade attacks.

This time, Carroll felt the fortress suddenly start trembling.

The gigantic palm's fingers bent and pulled the heavy fortress out of the ground. Like throwing a baseball, it swung and sent the heavy fortress flying across a long distance, heavily landing on the protective shield and creating a string of electrical sparks.

Boom!

The Bloodshed Land elites in that direction of the protective shield almost fell from seeing a huge pile of metal flying toward them.

The heavy fortress rolled and landed on the ground, shaking the floor. However, the shield still protected the fortress. Its damage was negligible—remarkable defense. Only Carroll, who was inside, suffered from the sudden fall.

Malekith saw this and analyzed, “Carroll’s defense is very strong. Black Star seems to be unable to break through Carroll’s armor. It looks like this battle will be under Carroll’s control and turned into a complete battle of resources. That’s Black Star’s fatal weakness.”

Chapter 613: Turned Table

“This fortress’s defense is quite good. It’s Grade A equipment.”

Excitement flashed through Han Xiao’s eyes.

Carroll’s information popped up on the interface. His level was higher, some of his attributes and abilities were question marks, and his Energy Rank and health could not be seen.

Han Xiao was not surprised. He was only level 142, so even regular Grade As had a higher level than him.

The heavy fortress’ defense was very strong but not indestructible. However, Han Xiao did not want to fight head-on. As a Virtual Mechanic, he had his professional ethics. He started Virtual Intrusion and gave the controls of the gigantic palm to Phillip.

“Phillip, have some fun with him. Block his fire and don’t let him destroy too much of my army.”

“Order confirmed. Executing, hum...”

The gigantic palm slapped down again. Suddenly, the bottom of the heavy fortress emitted thrusting flames. The bulky fortress took off and dodged the attack, moving quickly in midair.

This was a flying fortress.

The gigantic palm chased the heavy fortress, and they started to duel in midair.

As Han Xiao focused on Virtual Intrusion, flames surrounded him, and the Mechanical Armies of the two sides fought intensely.

The strength of the five newly updated armies did not just increase by a little. Turquoise lava cannons blasted through iron; heat cannons melted metal; Space Bending Bombs were like mini black holes, creating vortexes in space everywhere they exploded; not to mention, the Mini Nuclear Mines could even plant mushrooms.

The Cube Army formed teams of three sizes: normal-sized Mini Cube Robots, small fused mechanical soldiers about half a man tall, and robots that were the height of a mini giant. They all had their advantages; some were swift, and some were tough.

The G-2 Heavy Armor Riders slashed right through the enemies. All sorts of melee weapons shattered their foes into countless parts all over the floor, creating blank spaces on the battlefield like erasers.

The performance of Han Xiao's Mechanical Army was an entire level higher than Carroll's standard mechanical soldiers; they were all semi elites.

The efficiency of the slaughter was exceptional, cutting down Carroll's mechanical army area by area.

Han Xiao's Mechanical Army had the upper hand from the moment the battle started.

However, the backup came nonstop and could not be fully eliminated. The wreckages stacked up on the ground. Carroll was dedicated to using up Han Xiao's stash; he did not even control the army to attack Han Xiao and only focused on his Mechanical Army. He did not care even if he had to lose three of his units in exchange for one of Han Xiao's.

As such, Han Xiao's five armies were slowly losing numbers.

The mechanical soldiers that occasionally got close to Han Xiao were either blasted by the Watcher Instrument or shattered by Oathkeepers.

This kind of battle of resources was like a stalemate.

A Vanguard Official could not help but ask, "How long are they going to fight for?"

Malekith shook his head and said, "At least a few hours."

This time, another shadow jumped up. The other Vanguard Officials looked over and were shocked.

"Number two, you're here too!"

"Hmm, the commander told me to take a look." The person who had just arrived was a tall, skinny human. His body shape was a breath of fresh air among the muscular men that filled Bloodshed Land.

This guy's nickname was Hunting Blade. There were different styles among the Pugilist class, not just the brutal style. The one that he took involved using swift weapons. He was ranked second among the Eight Vanguard Officials, hence, number two.

There were rankings among the eight Vanguard Officials. The commander Vanguard Official was the boss; he was the most senior and strongest among the Vanguard Officials. He had been receiving personal guidance from Heber, reaching Grade A+, and was a training maniac. He spent almost all his free time in training. Second seat Hunting Blade was very strong, too. The two of them usually carried out more dangerous missions and could hardly be seen. Now that Hunting Blade had suddenly appeared, it surprised the other Vanguard Officials.

Upon briefly looking at the battle, Hunting Blade quickly analyzed it and slowly said, "Black Star looks to be having the upper hand but is actually stuck. Carroll wants to drag the battle out, so Black Star must quickly end the battle. If he can't penetrate Carroll's defense, when his armies are too damaged, the situation will take a direct turn downward, and he will lose for sure."

"That's what I thought." Malekith nodded. "The situation is looking good. Carroll has the home advantages and is considerably strong. Black Star has a very slim chance of winning."

"Carroll is... not too bad."

Hunting Blade nodded and expressed his approval for Carroll's strength.

On the other side, Ralph and the other two arrived. They climbed up the building to watch the battle, asked the spectators around them, and figured out what was going on.

“Black Star challenged Bloodshed Land’s officer in their territory? He’s got some guts.”

Ralph was shocked.

“He’s doing it for Ames. Floating Dragon Island’s current officer challenging an ex-officer and traitor, it’s meaningful.” The high-ranking Klent official chuckled.

Ralph nodded. He turned to look at Ames, who was not far away, and realized that Ames was completely focused on the battle.

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Boom!

The attacks from both sides never stopped, and it was entering a stalemate.

Suddenly, Carroll’s heavy fortress sped up in an instant and distanced itself from the gigantic palm before shapeshifting.

The heavy machines split up into mechanical parts and combined again. At the same time, Carroll threw out a pile of compressed orbs that expanded into new parts. Countless parts quickly fused together.

In the blink of an eye, the parts became a forty-meter-tall huge, human-shaped mechanical suit!

Large Battle Suit, [Giant Soldier—Ship Destroyer]!

The Ship Destroyer was human-shaped. It had two arms and two legs but no head. Its top was the tapered ending of its body. Its color was striped black and green. Thick, heavy armor covered its joints and weaknesses. It was wide and short on top, and narrow and long below. Its legs were equipped with thrusters and caterpillar track wheels. Its body was covered in mounted weapons, and behind it was a pair of metal thruster wings.

To describe it in a simpler way, this thing looked like an upside-down green trash can with limbs and wings.

Carroll looked at Han Xiao from above before sitting in the cockpit in the middle of its body.

Bang!

The Ship Destroyer made a swift roll after landing, its huge body shaking the ground. It then half squatted on the floor and pulled out a Thermal Melting Sword with one hand as its other hand’s armored plate expanded into a huge bulky alloy shield.

The Heavy Machinery Style relied on various enormous machines for combat. These large mechanical suits were usually called Giant Soldier Mechanical Suits. Its thirty to forty meters height could compare to some smaller spaceships.

Such a large size meant that more energy sources and complex structures could be included inside, so its performance was remarkably high, and it could be used to battle in space. It was equivalent to a more mobile and agile galactic carrier.

Virtual Mechanics could take part in universe wars by hacking; Heavy Armor Mechanics could build these Gundam-like Giant Soldiers to fight battleships.

The Ship Destroyer Giant Soldier held the alloy shield in front and started sprinting forward. Its shield heavily clashed with Han Xiao's gigantic palm. The tremendous force instantly deflected the gigantic palm aside. Overpowering the gigantic palm twice its size, the Ship Destroyer raised its Thermal Melting Sword and slashed horizontally across the battlefield.

Hu!

The high temperature produced white light that slashed across a huge area. Friend or foe, countless mechanical soldiers were shattered into pieces by the heavy sword.

Han Xiao squinted. The Watcher Instrument fused together into a large caliber cannon. A bucket thick dark blue light beam launched out and landed straight on the Ship Destroyer's chest.

Hum!

A light-yellow shield appeared and blocked this light beam. The light beam exploded into countless pieces and could not hurt the Ship Destroyer itself.

Even Gundam is out. He's really motivated.

Han Xiao curled his lips. He was not surprised at all. After so many days of peeking, he had seen Carroll maintaining this Giant Soldier mechanical suit several times.

The Class Advancement of a Mechanic also affected the result of fusing blueprints. After choosing one branch, other than the Potential Point cost of learning knowledges from the other branches being tripled, some of the blueprints of the other two branches could not be fused.

Han Xiao had chosen Virtual Mechanic, so when he gambled on blueprints, he could not get some of the Heavy Armor Mechanic blueprints, such as Giant Soldiers like the Ship Destroyer.

Carroll clearly did not use the Giant Soldier to just defeat Han Xiao; it would be like trying to kill a mosquito with a cannon.

His goal was to use the Giant Soldier to quickly wipe out Black Star's Mechanical Army.

He did not want to use the Ship Destroyer trump card initially, but the quality of Black Star's Mechanical Army was beyond his expectations. His disposable troops died too fast, and the backup could barely keep up. If he did not use the Giant Soldier, Carroll worried that he might have lost control of the situation.

"Carroll turned from defensive to offensive. Even I can feel the energy wave of this Giant Soldier. It's very strong. It would take me a very long time to defeat it." Outside the protective shield, shocked, Malekith's impression of Carroll improved.

Hunting Blade nodded. "Now, this is decent."

Far away in the palace, Heber let out a faint hum, expressing commendation.

At this time, a sudden change occurred on the battlefield!

The mechanical soldiers on the training ground suddenly all stopped moving as if someone had pressed the 'pause' button.

Carroll was stunned. Just as he wanted to control the Ship Destroyer and move, what he got was a bunch of random noises from the control panel. The artificial intelligence did not reply at all, and the nerves connection completely stopped working.

The Ship Destroyer stood still just like all the machines on the training ground.

The battlefield that had just been filled with bullets suddenly became deadly silent.

The sudden change caused the expressions of all the spectators to stiffen.

Ding!

A crisp sound came from the Berserk Ape's Virtual Intrusion panel.

Han Xiao clenched his face and snickered.

His voice traveled out, extremely loud and clear on the completely silent battlefield, so everyone could hear him.

"Alright, the foreplay is finished."

Han Xiao clearly knew that Carroll had the home advantage, so he had never been willing to turn this into a battle of resources. He had used the Mechanical Armies to stall the enemy's troops and give himself time to use Virtual Intrusion.

Now, with Risda and Phillip's support, the hacking was complete.

These standard machines were all controlled by the same artificial intelligence, which was beaten up by Risda and had lost control. All the machines controlled by Carroll stopped functioning—they would only recover after a system reboot.

Taking the opportunity, Han Xiao walked toward the Giant Soldier.

Dong! Dong!

As he walked forward, rows and rows of mechanical soldiers fell to the ground, all paralyzed. The scene was magnificent, like thousands of people kneeling to welcome their king!

One word, glorious!

Han Xiao walked forward unobstructed—this was the easiest process of closing the distance he ever had.

Virtual Mechanics were best at fighting other Mechanics. As the saying went, 'No cannons, no guns? The enemy will build for us.'

Seeing all his machines being taken over by Han Xiao, Carroll's face inside the Ship Destroyer cockpit was furious. He felt a strong sense of humiliation.

As a Mechanic, when his machines were taken away by someone else, it was an indescribable feeling, like losing all dignity.

"Quickly, reboot the system!" Carroll yelled.

"Dia—Diagnosing, getting rid of the virus, estimated time unknown..."

An alarm echoed in the cockpit, accompanied by a piercing noise.

"Sh*t, it's too late!" Seeing Han Xiao approaching, Carroll finally started to panic.

However, he still held onto the last bit of hope. As Black Star wanted to do this as quickly as possible, he only used the most brutal way to paralyze the Ship Destroyer's operating system and did not obtain its control. Therefore, he could still hide in the Ship Destroyer.

As long as Han Xiao did not penetrate the Ship Destroyer's armor before he rebooted the system, he would still have a chance to regain control of the situation.

However, the next moment, Carroll's last hope was gone.

All of Han Xiao's Mechanical Army aimed at the Ship Destroyer, and countless attacks covered the sky. The Ship Destroyer's shield only lasted two seconds against those attacks before shattering.

Boom!

The chest armor was focused on as explosions erupted. The Ship Destroyer could not handle such a strong force and collapsed to the ground, face up.

The gigantic hand disassembled itself and turned into more than ten large mechanical hands, which became drills and dug out a hole in the Ship Destroyer's body.

Between the wires and energy pipes, Carroll's cockpit was exposed.

Due to the system failure, Carroll could not even parachute out. The Ship Destroyer became a cell that imprisoned him.

Looking at Han Xiao jumping into the cockpit, with a horrified expression, Carroll hastily said, "I admit..."

Before he could finish, Han Xiao's large hand grabbed onto his mouth like an iron claw, making Carroll swallow the rest of his words.

"Go!"

Berserk Throw!

Boom!

Carroll was thrown out of the Ship Destroyer and flew right into the sky rolling, ascending hundreds of meters quickly and landing on the ceiling of the training ground's shield.

He did not have a strong physique. Despite being Calamity Grade Super, his toughness was far beneath that of a Pugilist. His head was spinning from this throw, and he entered the [Stunned] state from the Berserk Throw.

However, before he landed, Han Xiao flew right under him in an instant.

Hundreds of meters was just one leap for Berserk Ape.

Buzz!

The next second, blinding lightning emerged from Han Xiao's body, illuminating Carroll's terrified expression.

Like pulling a bow, Han Xiao's arms pulled back before his fists bashed down heavily onto Carroll's chest, pressing him onto the ceiling of the protective shield.

Boom!

Like a ball of lightning in midair.

Power Detonation!

Gene Liberation!

Germinal Organization Leader Character Summon Card—Armor Piercing Consecutive Attacks!

Han Xiao did not hold back. With the three layers of bonuses, his attack power was elevated to a terrifying level.

Boom!

The explosive soundwave created a circular wave.

The power of this punch penetrated Carroll's body and shattered the protective shield of the entire training ground!

Amid the shattered shield, Carroll flew up into the sky like a rocket, leaving circles of expanding waves.

Dark red blood dripped from the sky.

All the Bloodshed Land spectators opened their mouths wide and looked up at Carroll, who was flying into the sky.

Malekith was stunned. In just ten seconds, Han Xiao had ended the battle of resources and finished the duel.

It was way too fast!

So fast that he could barely react to it!

Chapter 614: Official Party

Carroll flew higher and higher.

While the other spectators were stunned, Hunting Blade was the first to react. He jumped up into the sky, caught up to Carroll's ascending body, and grabbed Carroll with his hands like a chicken, not giving Carroll the chance to yell, "I'll be back!"

The two of them landed in the training ground filled with machine scraps, stirring up a wave of dust.

As soon as Hunting Blade let go, Carroll collapsed to the ground. With one hand supporting himself and another clutching his chest, he coughed nonstop.

"Ahem..."

Blood spilled from the corners of Carroll's mouth, his face pale. Despite wearing a simple single unit battle suit, this punch still did quite a lot of damage to him.

However, he had the physique of a Calamity Grade Super. Although it was far from Pugilists', he did not lose combat capability from one attack; he had just broken a few bones, and his lungs had almost exploded.

Although Han Xiao did not hold back at all, he knew that a Calamity Grade would not be heavily injured easily given the fact that they still had energy to protect their body. Furthermore, this was a spar; he could not kill one of Bloodshed Land's men in their territory. Beating the opponent was enough.

Virtual Intrusion had created an opportunity, and Han Xiao had always been good at grabbing opportunities. He was cautious, too. In order to prevent any accidents, he did not ridicule Carroll and directly blew him away, guaranteeing his victory.

Carroll's injuries were not too severe, and he still had the ability to fight. However, he had been blown out of the venue, and the machines that he controlled were temporarily paralyzed. Even though he could continue to fight after the system rebooted, it was clear that he had been defeated by Black Star.

The battle had ended, and the result was his defeat.

"You..."

Carroll's face was filled with frustration. He clutched his chest and coughed a few more times while glaring at Han Xiao, who landed nearby.

"Sigh, that was close. I almost lost."

Han Xiao removed Berserk Ape, smiled, and shook his head.

*Bullsh*t! You clearly won easily!* many spectators screamed in their minds.

Han Xiao looked at the Virtual Intrusion panel. There was close to no time left before Carroll's artificial intelligence rebooted, so he looked around and said, "You've lost. There are so many people watching. You'll accept it, won't you?"

Carroll noticed the eyes of the spectators on him. He clenched his teeth and felt beaten. He had a huge home advantage but was easily defeated by Black Star. This guy's combat capability was too strong...

The identity difference between the two of them amplified the effect of his loss.

Black Star was Floating Dragon Island's current officer, whereas he was a traitor in others' eyes. Now that the traitor had been defeated by someone from Floating Dragon, it was clearly the result people wanted to see. Not to mention, he had just provoked Ames a few days ago, and then he was beaten by Black Star. With those thoughts in mind, Carroll felt extremely embarrassed.

Carroll looked in Ames' direction subconsciously, only to notice that Ames did not even look at him, the loser, but at Black Star. This made him even more furious.

In the spectator area outside, Ames exhaled lightly and smiled in relief.

At the moment Black Star blasted Carroll away with that thunderous punch, she had felt the unhappiness that she had kept in over the past few days all disappear, vented with Han Xiao's punch. She immediately felt that even the sun was brighter.

Ames found that Han Xiao looked pleasing to her eyes no matter how she looked at him, so she kept staring at Han Xiao.

As for the person whom she had always been 'thinking about', Carroll, Ames did not even want to take another look at him. The position of this traitor had become nothing in her eyes; she had let it go.

"I have someone better," Ames murmured.

Not far away, Ralph sighed. He had only met Black Star a few days ago. At that moment, Han Xiao's position in his mind became slightly higher. "Dragon Emperor found a spectacular guy."

If there's a chance in the future, maybe I can entrust some sensitive missions to Black Star... Ralph pondered and thought about hiring Black Star Army. The Purple Crystal Civilization ruled Colton, and Black Star Army's stronghold was in Colton, so there was a natural reason for them to work together.

Rossozzi rubbed the tentacles on his chin. On the surface, he was not affected at all, but in his mind, he thought. *I heard that Noriosse have invested in the Black Star Army. They have quite the potential. Hmm... seems worth investing in them.*

After socializing over the past few days, he knew Black Star, too. Due to the fact that there were many important people among the guests, he did not make any proposals to Han Xiao; only now did he think of investing.

The high-ranking Klent official squinted slightly and suddenly said, "Black Star defeated Tyrant's man in Bloodshed Land. What will Heber do?"

Not far away, Malekith and the other Vanguard Officials were thinking about this question, too.

Someone frowned and asked, "Will His Excellency Heber interfere?"

Malekith shook his head. "This is a spar, so probably not..."

Carroll's defeat was certain. The Vanguard Officials were used to battle; they were not too shocked or stunned by the result, only surprised by Black Star's strength.

Many Vanguard Official were eager to spar with Han Xiao, too.

The question that they were most interested in at the moment was Heber's stand toward this.

At the same time, in the palace...

"Your man lost," Austin said jokingly.

"I have eyes." Heber frowned slightly before waving his hand. "Nothing to watch anymore, turn it off."

"Aren't you going to reply?"

"No need to." Heber was not angry. Since it was a fair fight and Black Star had won fair and square, it just showed how capable Black Star was.

Austin stopped the stream, and the two of them stopped paying attention to the incident.

Heber did not interfere, but no one thought that he did not know about this. Seeing nothing happened, they understood that Heber approved of the result of this battle.

Bloodshed Land believed in strength; Carroll being defeated publicly made the others embarrassed, too.

Many spectators shook their heads and left. Malekith and the others gave Carroll a disappointed look and disappeared.

Carroll knew that the result was decided and had nothing to say.

"Don't forget our bet," Han Xiao kindly reminded.

"What blueprints do you want?" Carroll clenched his teeth. The Tyrant definitely knew about the bet. If he did not live up to it, it would bring shame to Bloodshed Land.

He did not have a choice but to carry out the promise.

"Let me think, the mechanic fortress earlier and that Giant Soldier mechanical suit. I want these two." Han Xiao chuckled.

"Okay!" Carroll's heart was bleeding.

Then, Han Xiao requested three other blueprints. He had peeked at Carroll's weapon inventory before, and there were many things that he wanted, but Carroll did not use all of them in the battle, so Han Xiao could not request them.

As a Virtual Mechanic, although he could not fuse the blueprints for some exclusive machines from other branches, he could still directly learn them if he obtained the blueprint. After all, when gambling on blueprints, a single knowledge combination had dozens of possible blueprint outcomes. Class Advancements only made some of them unavailable, but with the blueprint, as long as his knowledge met the requirements, he could build that machine.

“I will give you the blueprints tomorrow. You don’t have to worry about me going back on my word; I have at least this much credibility.”

Frustrated, Carroll said that before leaving without even cleaning up the training ground. He did not even dare look at Ames.

Unbothered, Han Xiao looked at the interface notification.

[Ames’ Fury] Completed!

You have received 15,000,000 Experience

You have received +15 Renown

+2500 Floating Dragon Faction Favorability

+20 Ames Favorability. Current relationship: [Confidant]

+2 Heber Favorability. Current Relationship: [Indifferent]

This time, Ames landed beside Han Xiao with a smile on her face.

“Good fight.”

“Well, I couldn’t keep watching you get bullied,” Han Xiao joked and found an excuse to explain his actions.

“I know.” Ames smiled faintly. She suddenly felt somewhat nostalgic.

Ever since she reached Beyond Grade A, it had been a very long time since she had felt what it was like to be protected. She had never expected to feel that way again.

I’m so much stronger than Black Star, but he was the one that helped me in the end... Ames laughed in her heart.

Aurora looked up at Han Xiao, then at Ames. She tugged on the edge of Hila’s clothes and said softly, “Big sister...”

Hila looked straight and coldly said, “What?”

“No—Nothing...” Aurora shrank back.

...

After collecting his machines and placing them into the Blacklight Stealth, Han Xiao and the others returned to their rooms.

This challenge did not cause anything afterward, but very soon, all the party guests knew about the battle between Han Xiao and Carroll through the spectators.

Black Star had fought for Ames in Bloodshed Land, defeating Floating Dragon Island's traitor openly in the Tyrant's territory, and the Tyrant approved it with silence. Black Star had gained respect on the Dragon Emperor's behalf, and many were surprised.

After the battle, the day passed peacefully.

The next day, the official party finally started.

The people had waited days for the official party.

All the guests dressed up neatly and formally, gathering in Heber's palace hall. This place had been rearranged into a party venue. There were all kinds of rare food and drinks as well as musicians standing by at the side.

Not just the hall, around half of the entire palace was the party venue, all arranged properly. The guests could walk around the place as they like. There were also many small, private rooms upstairs for guests that wanted to communicate privately.

The goal of the party was to invite the people of the top organizations in Shattered Star Ring to discuss all sorts of topics, expand their connections, build relationships, exchange information, plan the development of the Shattered Star Ring, and so on. It was like a social club but more serious, business-focused, and high class.

The guests were chatting with each other. Ames stood by the side and did not talk to anyone. Hila and Aurora were beside her. They did not know what to say during this kind of occasion, so they did not speak either.

Han Xiao was socializing on behalf of Ames. People came to chat with him passionately from time to time. He dealt with the guests while at the same time observing others, quietly collecting information.

Not a long wait after, the host of the party, Heber, finally appeared. The place instantly became quiet. Everyone stopped talking and looked at Heber, waiting for him to speak.

"I'm glad to see so many familiar faces this time once again." Heber looked around. "I hope you guys will benefit from this party like always. So... let the party begin."

Chapter 615: Austin's Gift

As the musicians started to play, the party officially began. The guests all had their own goals. They split into twos and threes and headed to more private areas to discuss business.

Heber took a few guests up the stairs. Not far away, the Klent high ranking official also went upstairs with a few others.

Seeing this, Han Xiao squinted and pondered.

The Tyrant and the Klents are allies. He has already secretly joined the Crimson Dynasty's side, so maybe the Klents have become the Crimson Dynasty's friend, probably even earlier than Tyrant. After all, the Crimson Dynasty wants to rope in the Shattered Star Ring's organizations, so their priority should be the

Star Cluster Civilizations. The Klents got persuaded first, then recommended Bloodshed Land as an ally. The reason Heber introduced the envoy to the Dragon Emperor and Magus might be because the Klents asked him to negotiate with the Beyond Grade A Supers...

This would mean that in the seven Star Cluster Civilizations of Shattered Star Ring, Klent Kingdom might have already joined the Crimson Dynasty's side.

Connecting to the storyline of his previous life, the main storyline of Version 3.0 [Crimson Tide] was the Crimson Dynasty's expansion stirring up all the Star Fields, including the Shattered Star Ring. However, most of that chaos were not directly caused by the Crimson Dynasty but the organizations of these Star Fields themselves.

Back then, the players did not have access to any inside knowledge. After Han Xiao connected these two things... the Crimson Dynasty might have been behind all the organizations that caused trouble during [Crimson Tide]. They pulled strings and made the structure of the universe unstable.

Heber did not introduce Zoel to all the guests, probably because the Crimson Dynasty did not want to be too high profile. They might have only invited some representatives of the stronger organizations to private meetings, like the Beyond Grade A meeting a day ago.

So, the storm is already brewing...

Han Xiao shook his head. According to his calculations, the effect brought by the Crimson Dynasty's actions would not appear in Version 2.0. The most likely scenario would be these effects gradually appearing over the ten or so years during the version update after Version 2.0, which would then turn into the Version 3.0, [Crimson Tide].

Currently, it was only the early stage of Version 2.0. Other than the Planet Aquamarine players, the players on other novice planets were still playing with mud. There were still a few more years till the next version update. During this period, the likelihood of something huge erupting was very low.

Planet Aquamarine's original main storyline was the conflict between DarkStar and Godora. However, DarkStar was gone, so his Black Star Army had become the players' new main storyline. The storyline was now semi free exploration, so the players would not face something huge in Version 2.0.

This was the best time for his faction to grow.

As the Great Mechanic Han was contemplating, Rossozzi approached.

"Black Star, I have some things I want to speak to you about."

Han Xiao stopped his train of thought, smiled, and nodded. "Mr. Rossozzi, what is it?"

Rossozzi rubbed the messy tentacles on his chin and said, "I want to invest in Floating Dragon Island and your Black Star Army. Maybe we should discuss the detailed terms and conditions."

Han Xiao's eyes sparkled. *Lucky, another one here to give me money!*

He turned around and looked at Ames. Ames did not disapprove and let Han Xiao fully handle it. Han Xiao pulled Rossozzi aside, and the two of them discussed the details.

Not long after, the two of them quickly decided on the investment plan. Similar to the terms and conditions of the Noriosse Financial Group, Rossozzi's group would also provide resources to the Black Star Army and Floating Dragon Island in exchange for returns in other aspects.

Investing in military organizations had always been important to large financial groups; Rossozzi's was no exception. After finalizing the details, he left satisfied and content.

The official contract and terms would be sent over after the party ended. Han Xiao was rather glad. The Black Star Army had obtained one more investor, which was very helpful to the development of the faction.

"Black Star."

Someone else called out to him.

Han Xiao turned and looked. To his surprise, it was Austin. He brought along a group of Forbidden Sorcerers and came before Han Xiao.

"Your Excellency Magus, what is it?" Facing a Beyond Grade A, Han Xiao was formal.

Austin did not reply. He smiled and opened his palm. A dark blue light appeared in his hand. It turned into a vortex, and the light quickly disappeared. Then, a small gray orb appeared.

Han Xiao looked closely. This small orb was not solid but was made of flowing gray fog. It was compressed by a certain power and kept its shape of a small ball.

"This is..." Han Xiao was confused and did not understand Austin's intentions.

Austin played with the small gray fog ball and slowly said, "Once upon a time, my spiritual body travelled to a phantom secondary dimension and met a strangely strong Void Lord. It almost eroded my spiritual body but was defeated by me in the end. This is the core essence that the Void Lord left behind after dissipating. I want to give it to you."

Han Xiao was stunned.

A Void Lord's core essence was extremely rare. Almost only Mages could obtain such materials.

Entering a secondary dimension was an ability only high-level Mages possessed. They could often obtain all sorts of strange and weird items.

In terms of profiteering... ahem, production abilities, Mages and Mechanics stood at the peak among the five Super classes. In terms of collecting materials, Mages might be even better than Mechanics.

Mechanics were mostly in a bankrupt state all the time, completely the opposite of Mages. A class that could burn their mana bar to earn money with zero cost, via Enchanting, was basically everyone's common enemy.

Han Xiao deeply understood the meaning behind the phrase 'random acts of kindness only lead to either rape or robbery'. *So, what is Austin's intention behind suddenly giving me a gift? Don't tell me he's trying to win me over like Heber, but took a more subtle and gentle route?*

"Why give it to me?"

“Because I feel you might need it more than me.” Austin winked.

Han Xiao was then reminded.

That’s right, when I used Observer’s Mark on Zoel yesterday, Austin noticed it.

Could this be the reason?

“You’re not a Mage, but you can control Void Energy. It seems like you’ve been eroded by Void Genes before. Most species turn into monsters after that, but you controlled it and turned it into your ability. You’re very lucky. Therefore, the Void Lord’s core essence can enhance this ability and give you stronger power...” Austin proved Han Xiao’s guess.

Austin had no idea that Han Xiao had the player interface. To him, the reason Han Xiao could use the Void Energy was because he had been eroded by Void Genes before. Plus, there were skeletons of Void Dragons buried within Floating Dragon Island, so he thought that he knew what had happened to Han Xiao. Hence, he wanted to help Ames’ officer.

Anyway, it was nothing to him.

Han Xiao could only cough and agree with Austin’s speculation with silence. Then, he started pondering.

His race was already a Void Race, and a Void Lord’s core essence could enhance the strength of his Void Genes and increase his attributes. Furthermore, during his next Race Evolution, there would be a chance that he would be able to skip the next stage in the evolution chain and jump to the stage after that, giving him even stronger void race options.

It was indeed very useful. Plus, it was extremely rare and almost unobtainable on the market.

“What do I need to give in exchange?” Han Xiao squinted. He was definitely tempted, but he knew not to take gifts without asking its price.

Austin had a huge amount of resources, and a Void Lord’s core essence was just a drop in the ocean, but Han Xiao did not think that Austin needed to give it to him.

Even if Austin was helping Ames’ officer because of Ames, Han Xiao was not willing to accept a gesture of kindness from a Beyond Grade A stranger.

The relationship between him and Austin was far from him being able to accept gifts so easily.

“This is a gift. You don’t have to... hmm...” Austin seemed to suddenly recall something. He then changed his words mid-sentence and said, “Maybe, one day in the future, I will need your help. Consider this a prepayment.”

“Sounds good, as long as it doesn’t go against my position and principles.”

“Of course.”

Han Xiao nodded and accepted the Void Lord’s core. He gave it a close look.

[Void Lord's Essence]: The core of an advanced Void being, contains high quality void energy, extremely precious. Many Mages are willing to pay a high price for it. You can also give it to certain special characters to trigger missions. You can even eat it, if you're not afraid of it giving you a stomachache... oh, I mean not afraid of being eroded by Void Genes.

Han Xiao placed it into his pocket and bowed to Austin to express his gratitude.

Austin smiled with his adorable face before slowly saying, "Heber is reckless, and Ames is careless. I know your potential clearer than they do. One day, you might leave the Dragon Emperor and build your own name. It has been too long since a legend was born in this Star Field... I will be observing you. Don't disappoint me."

Before Han Xiao could reply, Austin took his Forbidden Sorcerers and left.

Han Xiao had a strange expression on his face.

Austin did not speak as if he was high and mighty; he was very friendly and gave Han Xiao a good impression, but those words made him feel like he was facing an elder...

...

The party went on. The people present all had their business to discuss. Occasionally, someone would approach Han Xiao to discuss some topics, but not often.

Other than Rossozzi and Austin, the others that went to chat with him mostly just had a casual conversation. Han Xiao was happy with not being busy. When he had no one to chat with, Han Xiao would enjoy the food and drinks in a corner with Ames and the sisters, chitchatting.

As time passed, the party gradually came to an end. The guests got most of the intelligence or partnerships they wanted. Han Xiao eavesdropped on some intelligence that was not really considered a secret but was unobtainable to regular people. After all, everyone there had high positions, so even the information they casually leaked was quite valuable.

In the private room upstairs, the Crimson Dynasty envoy, Zoel, had already privately met important people one after another.

Chapter 616: The Party Ends, Trip to Sunil.

"We will consider your offer."

The Star Cluster Civilization representative opposite Zoel stood up, bowed respectfully, and left the bright guest room. Zoel was the only one left in the room.

Zoel shook his head lightly, lifted the wine glass from the table, and took a sip. The heated emerald-colored wine poured like a string of fire down his throat.

He had seen more than ten people who represented the top organizations of the Shattered Star Ring. Everyone had been respectful to him due to his identity, but when they discussed the details, none had made a clear decision.

However, siding with the Crimson Dynasty was a huge decision that needed a long time to consider—Zoel understood that.

The Shattered Star Ring was the Federation of Light's territory, but Star Cluster Civilizations were not the Federation of Light's subordinates. There was no loyalty. All civilizations were independent. They only approved of the Federation of Light's authority—that was all. Every civilization had its own ambitions, every civilization wanted to expand, and the new Star Field was the opportunity.

“Currently, of the seven Star Cluster Civilizations in the Shattered Star Ring, only Klent is siding with us firmly. Judging from the current situation, there should be some more Star Cluster Civilizations that will side with us. Combined with some large organizations like Bloodshed Land, there should be sufficient chess pieces.”

The Crimson Dynasty's ambition to expand was not limited to just this. Zoel was only in charge of the Shattered Star Ring; there were envoys in other Star Fields. They had included the entire Galaxy in their plan. The new area outside the Shattered Star Ring was just one of the things that the Crimson Dynasty wanted.

It would take years just to complete the initial part of the plan.

...

The party was coming to an end. The people were done with business and gathered in the hall. Heber appeared again, gave a closing speech, and announced the end of the party.

The party looked casual, but it was everything but casual. Many issues that could affect countless people were decided there, through a few words between some important people. This was part of the fundamentals of how the universe operated; one's power was closely related to their resources.

Han Xiao benefitted quite a lot as well. Not only did he get to know secret information about the Crimson Dynasty's plan and mentally prepare himself, he also made a lot of connections. He had finally made it to the top of the social circle.

Although he had achieved this mainly because of his position on Floating Dragon Island, this was a good start. He would not have gotten the chance to join this party with his own strength and power. The right to enter the circle was more important; his position would gradually become higher.

If 'connections' could be quantified, Han Xiao's connections had multiplied tens of times in this party. The people he had contact before were mostly Star System Civilizations and people in the mercenary industry. Now, he had the contacts of top organizations from all kinds of industries in the Shattered Star Ring. If he faced difficulties in the future, he would be able to receive more comprehensive and stronger support.

The nickname 'Black Star Networking Group' became even more suitable.

Furthermore, he had met other two Beyond Grade As of the Shattered Star Ring and surprisingly made a connection with Austin.

The guests bade farewell to Heber and left. Han Xiao and the rest walked out of the palace and immediately saw Carroll, who was waiting right outside with a long face.

“Black Star, here are the blueprints you wanted.” Carroll threw Han Xiao a new communicator; the five blueprints were stored inside.

Han Xiao took a brief look and confirmed that the blueprints were right. He nodded and walked past him. He did not want to have any further communication with Carroll.

Ames looked forward and walked past Carroll as well.

Carroll was left alone, feeling awkward and completely ignored.

This time, a shadow occupied his vision.

Carroll looked up and saw Heber standing beside him, looking at him from above.

“Your Excellency Heber...” Carroll’s face turned pale and stuttered, “Sorry, I lost this time.”

“Will you lose next time?” Heber said coldly.

It was a simple question with zero blame. Carroll suddenly felt energized like he was encouraged. “Absolutely not!”

“That’s my subordinate.” Heber slowly nodded, turned around, and walked away.

...

Han Xiao and the rest did not want to stay on Planet Heber. They headed directly to the dock, boarded the Blacklight Stealth, and left Bloodshed Land, heading back.

While Ames trained the sisters, Han Xiao told Risda to control the spaceship and went to the training room, checking the five new blueprints.

One of them was the heavy fortress that Carroll had used during the spar. Its official name was ‘Flying Fortress’. Its defense was extraordinary and could be used as a flying carrier.

There was also the Giant Soldier, which could replace spaceships as a weapon in space. Its mobility, armor value, destructive power, melee and ranged combat capabilities, and other attributes were all beyond average. It was quite the well-rounded equipment, as well as Han Xiao’s first Giant Soldier blueprint.

Heavy Armor Mechanics built heavy machines; these machines’ basic attributes were usually higher. These two things could be used as Grade A standard combat equipment directly.

The other three were also important blueprints to Carroll. One was medium-sized armor that was about six to seven meters tall, operated by more than one person. Its performance was excellent and was best for offensive combat. It was suitable to be sold to guilds.

Another was a type of anti-gravity electromagnetic hovering motorbike carrier that was equipped with a shield to block the universe's radiation and allowed interstellar travel. Han Xiao had the Berserk Ape mechanical suit, so he did not need it. However, the great thing about these kinds of motorbikes was that they looked extremely cool. It could be the next tier replacement for the Nuclear Flying Backpack. Of course, Han Xiao had to improve the blueprint and add a self-destruct function.

The last one was high-caliber, ship-mounted artillery, a type of spaceship attachment blueprint. Ship-mounted weapons were mostly heavy firearms, which were, of course, much more powerful than portable weapons.

The prerequisite knowledges for those five blueprints were mostly from the Armed Branch, and the highest level knowledge was only High-End Knowledge.

After checking through the loot, Han Xiao took out the Void Lord's core essence and looked at it carefully.

This tiny ball filled with gray fog had a very special texture when he held it. It was as if it did not exist and he could just shatter it easily. But when he actually tried to, he would feel a very strong repelling force.

Void Lord's core can enhance Void Genes, like the Void Dragon Pith but stronger. Han Xiao's eyes sparkled.

In the power pyramid of Void species, the Void Lord was at the top. Most of them existed in the secondary dimension as seen by Mages or hid in Void Vision and rarely interfered with reality. A Void Lord could be considered a high dimensional life form. A similar being would be Magic Beings. Void Lords gathered Void Energy to build their body and project it onto reality. They had thousands of forms. Even in Galaxy, where there were so many races, they were still considered rare beings.

This was not the first time he used this kind of item. Consuming the Void Lord's core was very beneficial to him. Usually, there would be risks of consuming genetic items, but the adaptability between the same species was very high. The chance of a side effect occurring was minimal.

Han Xiao opened his mouth and swallowed the tiny gray ball of fog. A freezing feeling exploded from his mouth and instantly expanded to his entire body as if even his soul was frozen.

Han Xiao could sense his own body at a microscopic level, and he could see his cells gradually growing stronger under these waves of highly-concentrated Void Energy. His genes changed once again.

You have used a Void Lord's Essence.

Fusion Progress: 38%... 61%... 100%

Fusion Complete!

Compatibility: Perfect

Permanent Attribute Increase: +8 STR, +12 DEX, +10 END, +10 INT, +15 MYS, +8 CHA

Your Talent [Intermediate Strengthened Life] became slightly stronger.

The freezing cold quickly went away. Han Xiao took a deep breath and looked at the interface notification.

The attribute increase was quite impressive, a total increase of sixty-three points. More surprisingly, there was a clear notification related to [Intermediate Strengthened Life]

This talent had been with him for a long time and provided him with a lot of health. The last time this talent leveled up, he had already speculated that he would have to use more gene items with no side effects to continue making the talent stronger. The Void Lord's Essence had proved him right.

Although the effect of [Intermediate Strengthened Life] was unchanged and did not level up, since there was a notification, it meant that this was the right path to take. Han Xiao decided to make collecting rare Void species' materials a new mission.

...

Han Xiao first took Ames and the sisters back to Floating Dragon Island. It was a peaceful trip.

Arriving on Floating Dragon Island, the Blacklight Stealth parked at the dock. Ames and the sisters got out and turned to look at Han Xiao, who was beside the hatch.

Han Xiao looked at Hila and Aurora and smiled. "You guys, train with the Dragon Emperor properly and quickly become stronger. I'm still waiting for you to help me."

Aurora raised her tiny hand up and said very seriously, "I will definitely work hard."

Hila opened her mouth but did not know what to say.

She suddenly realized that the two of them had to part again. She and her sister would be training on the unfamiliar Floating Dragon Island and start a new chapter in their lives.

It could be a very long time before she saw Han Xiao again. Hila could not help but think of the times back on Planet Aquamarine when she used to look up at the starry night. She felt her emotions become a mess.

Hila knew that she did not know Han Xiao very well. They had spent little time together, less than the time they had spent apart...

She hesitated then softly said, "Be careful."

"Got it, bye."

Han Xiao waved, and the hatch closed.

The next moment, the spaceship took off and disappeared.

Ames turned toward the sisters and said, "From now on, you will be starting your official training. I'll be very strict."

"I'm looking forward to it." Hila inhaled deeply, her expression dignified.

...

Away from Floating Dragon Island, the Blacklight Stealth entered hyperdrive and headed toward Planet Sunil.

Attending the Tyrant's party in the Seoul Star Cluster had taken quite a lot of time including travel. During this time, the Black Star Army had been maintaining its business. The players had yet to cause any big problems, so everything was operating as usual.

Not long ago, Herlous had sent a message. After 200,000 players worked for months, the Sunils finally made a huge breakthrough. They got rid of a large amount of Prophecy Stone mines, and the strength of the Psychic Current visibly weakened.

At this pace, the threat of the Catastrophe would very soon be completely eliminated, saving the Sunils.

However, as they dug deeper into the mines underground, they noticed some strange phenomena, so Herlous requested backup from him personally.

The information Han Xiao gained during Tyrant's party gave him quite a lot of pressure. He wanted to speed up the Black Star Army's development, so he decided to visit Planet Sunil himself and completely solve the Sunil's problems. At the same time, he would scout the area and prepare to build the third sub-base.

Furthermore, while doing that, he could reap the experience of 200,000 players, collect three billion experience, and level up to level 145, meeting the Class Advancement requirement.

Chapter 617: Planet Sunil's Natives!

The pure white clouds flew in the sapphire sky of Planet Sunil like pieces of silk. The gentle wind brought along a thin veil of fog and blew across the dense sea of trees, shaking them like a wave.

Green was an amazing color. Looking down on the surface, Han Xiao felt soothed.

The Blacklight Stealth slowly landed in the military area outside Forest City. Herlous was already waiting there with the Sunil superiors. Further away were many patrolling armored Sunil soldiers.

As soon as Han Xiao walked down the gangway, Herlous rushed toward him and gave him a passionate hug.

"Black Star, you're finally here!"

Han Xiao patted Herlous' shoulder, signaling him to let go. Herlous excitedly introduced the Sunil superiors to Han Xiao one after another.

They shook hands and greeted each other. The Sunil superiors were very humble. Black Star's position in the galaxy was far above that of the entire Sunil race. Plus, Black Star had helped them solve the issues of their planet. They would never forget this.

After the introduction, they started talking business. Han Xiao asked, "What's the situation now?"

"Amazing!" Herlous was exhilarated. He knew the most about the effect of the Black Star Army over the past few months; the situation of the Sunils had tremendously improved.

As he spoke, Herlous took out his communicator, opened the map projection of Planet Sunil, and explained in detail.

The threat on Planet Sunil came from the beasts. The cause of the Catastrophe was the Prophecy Stone mines hidden underground in various places. The sheer quantity caused a reaction and formed Psychic Currents, making the beasts go haywire.

Therefore, Sunil's first target was to clear out the Prophecy Stone mines of this planet.

However, due to the wild being dangerous, the exploration difficulty was exceedingly high. The Sunils only controlled a very small area and could not bear the cost of expanding their territory—many young warriors would be sacrificed if they did.

Thus, the Black Star Army just so happened to make up for this. With the help of spaceships and carriers, 200,000 players fearless of death discovered close to a thousand Prophecy Stone mines within a few months.

The shorter the distance from the mine, the stronger the Psychic Current. There was almost no beast living nearby, so the players could easily destroy all the Prophecy Stones in those mines.

According to the calculations of the Sunil Research Department, the overall strength of the Psychic Current on the planet had decreased considerably. The interval between Catastrophes was likely extended to more than ten years, which was two to three times greater than before. This meant that the Sunils' situation was not as urgent anymore. They had more time to rest and prepare. The result was exceptional.

This result was announced to the entire race, giving them previously unseen energy and hope.

The situation of their race was tremendously improved. All the Sunil warriors were excited.

Among them, Herlous was the most excited. His race was his home. The Black Star Army was the savior of Planet Sunil, and he was the one that connected the two sides. On one hand, he was excited due to his decision back then; on the other hand, he sincerely appreciated Black Star's help.

Of course, this result was not good enough. Since they wanted to solve the problem, the Sunils hoped to be more thorough.

"What are the difficulties faced in clearing out these mines?" Han Xiao asked.

As soon as he said this, the faces of those present became grave. Herlous said in a deep voice, "We had speculated about all sorts of situations and obstacles we might face, but we never expected it to be this serious."

Han Xiao was suddenly curious. *From the way Herlous put it, it seems like even 200,000 players cannot get rid of this problem.*

“By the way, where are the mercenaries? Why don’t I see them?” Han Xiao looked around and realized that there was not even one mercenary.

“Mostly still exploring and fighting outside in the wild. We built many camps to make sure that the mercenaries could resupply in the wild and not have to keep returning to Forest City. Only a small portion of the mercenaries currently reside in Forest City,” Herlous explained.

I see. That’s completely normal... Han Xiao nodded. It seemed like he needed a reason to recall all the players in the wild so that it would be more convenient for him to reap experience.

Putting this thought aside for the moment, Han Xiao rubbed his chin and asked with confusion, “So, what difficulty did you guys meet?”

“Well, the shallow mines were easy to clear out, but there are also tons of mines deeper underground, maybe many times deeper than the shallow mines. These are more difficult to clear and need bigger tools and more manpower, but this isn’t the main issue...” Herlous sighed and projected an image. On it were many strange-shaped beasts, but they all had the characteristics of insects.

“This is...” Han Xiao frowned.

“As we dug deeper, we reached a completely different layer of rocks. We shockingly discovered the tracks of some unidentified beasts. After the initial investigation, we realized that they are ancient underground beasts that never came to the surface. They are an enormous race living under Planet Sunil’s surface. From just the few nests we’ve discovered, there’s already more than a hundred million of these beasts. We have no idea how many more are in the underground world we have yet to explore...”

With a grave tone, Herlous said, “Maybe they are the real owners of this planet.”

Han Xiao now understood.

Sunil’s original mother planet had been destroyed, and they had only migrated to this Planet Sunil after that. Thus, they could be considered guests taking over the owner’s home.

As there were limited resources, Sunils did not explore underground, up till today. Only now did they realize that a large race existed under the planet’s surface. Those monsters were the natives of this planet.

If not for the Black Star Army, Sunil would still not have noticed such a huge threat lurking within the very planet that they lived on.

“For some reason, these monsters built their nests around the Prophecy Stone mines and indirectly protect the mines. They reject outside beings very strongly. Their body is very hard, they’re very swift, and they are able to secrete corrosive slime on their skin. They are about the same size as wild wolves. Dozens of underground exploration teams have been wiped out. The underground is their stage. It’s very difficult for us to fight when we can’t maximize our strength underground.

“Protect the Prophecy Stone mines?” Han Xiao pondered. Most underground creatures liked to be close to radioactive minerals—some even consumed them as food. However, the Prophecy Stone mines were not radioactive but stimulated beasts into a crazed state. Logically speaking, beasts would get as far away from the Prophecy Stone mines as they could, but these underground beasts had built their nests surrounding Prophecy Stones.

A word popped up in Han Xiao’s mind.

Mutation!

“Their race might be traced back to thousands of years ago. Lives change to adapt to the environment. Over a very long time, their genes mutated,” Han Xiao said. “Think about it, the Catastrophe causes all the beasts on this planet to go crazy, but you people have never met these monsters before. This means that they have never gone crazy and come to the surface, which shows that they’re used to the Psychic Currents and are immune to them. They have developed an extremely strong psychic resistance.”

The Sunils were guests that only migrated to this planet recently, while Prophecy Stones had existed for countless years. They had no idea about the Prophecy Stones’ effects on the native beasts throughout those countless years.

Herlous nodded. “That’s right. We call these underground monsters Subterranean Mutants.”

“Therefore, you guys summoned me to...” Han Xiao had a guess.

“Your Excellency Black Star, we hope to get your help,” a Sunil superior said seriously with the utmost respect. “We want to eliminate all Subterranean Mutants and completely control Planet Sunil. Our problems can only be resolved if we kill these underground monsters. Plus, there are countless resources underground. We can only collect them after the Subterranean Mutants are dealt with.”

In order to completely get rid of the Catastrophe, destroying all the underground mines was the only way. Hence, the Subterranean Mutants were the biggest obstacle. Furthermore, mining for underground resources would be unavoidable in the future. Subterranean Mutants were clearly a barrier for their development. In terms of population alone, the number of Subterranean Mutants was probably hundreds or even a thousand times that of the Sunils. The Sunils had absolutely no intention of coexisting with a species this large in numbers.

I thought so... Thinking of the beautiful nature that he had seen earlier when looking down from above, Han Xiao sighed. He looked at Herlous and said, “What do you think?”

“I agree.” Herlous was firm.

“Ok...” Han Xiao slowly said. “I hope you guys can understand that the nature of this incident has changed. This is a war hire; I will gather more spaceships and mercenaries.”

“Marvelous!” The Sunils were overjoyed.

“To ensure the transport of people and resources, I need to build a sub-base on Sunil immediately. Do you guys have any objections?”

“No.” The people shook their heads.

Coming to an agreement, Han Xiao walked aside and contacted Phillip.

“Help me to contact the Noriosse and Rossozzi financial groups. I will be building the third sub-base here in the Garton Star System, Planet Sunil. List the resources needed and send them to these two financial groups; we’ll use their channels.

“Gather the 200,000 mercenaries on Planet Sunil in Forest City. They are needed to build the base.

“Also, send out an Army Assembly on Planet Sunil, targeting all Black Star mercenaries!”

After accepting a string of orders, Phillip replied, “Orders confirmed, hum...”

Han Xiao did not stop there. Through the faction interface, he directly announced a new mission to all the players.

[Army Expansion—Base No. 3]!

...

Sunil soldiers patrolled outside a certain wild camp. In the camp, some players set up stores and formed teams.

There was quite a number of players in every camp. There were mission points and exploration points around the camps, and the players resupplied in the camps. Hence, they naturally became the players’ frequent spots.

Maple Moon sat in a corner with a ‘Repair’ mark on her head. She had set up a repairing store for equipment, and business was booming.

Back then, she had decided to follow the majority and went to Planet Sunil.

As a casual player, she did not like fighting and killing. She had always felt the Mechanic class was most suitable for her. In Version 1.0, she had followed Black Star for a very long time and benefitted a ton, so she was ahead of the other players. Her ability to repair and build was clearly far above many players of the same class. She was considered one of the top players.

Although she did not receive Black Star’s special treatment in Version 2.0, due to her already being ahead, her business had always been popular. Other players were more willing to go to her for repairs and purchases. With the large amounts of profits that she made from that, she had more resources to increase her strength, which formed a cycle.

However, Maple Moon rarely battled. Compared to fighting, she enjoyed the storyline more. The Sunil mission was right up her alley. Saving this race in danger and getting gratitude from the Sunils made her very happy.

There were quite many players who liked the storyline, similar to Maple Moon. To some players, profit was not the priority; what they wanted was a good story. The business plan that Han Xiao had set for the Black Star Army was to let the players experience various storylines through the hiring missions. The Sunil storyline was one of them. This way, their stories would become the army’s history.

At this time, Maple Moon realized that the players on the street had all stopped and opened their interface at the same time. This told her that something huge had happened, so she hastily checked the interface.

The mission to build the third base appeared in her eyes.

“Hmm? Black Star came to Sunil? Strange, the mission to save Sunil is not completed yet, and Base No. 3 can already be built?”

“Who cares? It’s a good thing that a new base can be built.”

The players chitchatted and left in groups, heading toward Forest City. The camp suddenly became empty.

Most players had already immersed themselves in the Black Star Army. They felt that their performance on Planet Sunil had made their faction grow again. They felt a sense of achievement.

Every time the faction developed, the players would feel fulfilled. Han Xiao’s method of building a sense of belonging was really working well.

Maple Moon packed up her store and headed to Forest City, too. Other than missions, she had another goal—to learn better blueprints from Black Star. She had stocked up quite a lot of experience over the past few months. She was not the only one; all the Mechanics on Planet Sunil were hoping to do the same.

Chapter 618: Class Advancement!

The chosen location for Base No. 3 was not far from Forest City. All 200,000 of the players that were outside returned immediately after receiving the mission. With the help of spaceships, they gathered in no time.

Outside Forest City, 200,000 players gathered and focused their eyes on Han Xiao. Han Xiao borrowed the Dragon Emperor’s style once again, sitting on a mechanical throne that hovered in midair. He was not really trying to look cool. There were so many players, so they would not be able to see him if he was not flying.

It had been a while since Han Xiao had last been in close contact with players. He briefly observed the players. The equipment of the 200,000 players that had stayed on Planet Sunil for a few months had visibly changed. They could roughly be grouped into three types of people. The first type was those that wore heavy armor, mostly Sunil Enlistee Class armor and some Worker Bee Armors. What was worth mentioning was that the Sunil Armors these players wore all came from his army. The Sunils clearly knew that Han Xiao had secretly learned about their blueprints... but it did not matter even if they knew.

The second type of players were those that did not wear armor; these players made up about one-tenth of all the players. The Great Mechanic Han could not figure out whether they were poor... or poor. Be it Pugilists or Espers, buying a set of armor had pros and no cons. Even Bloodshed Land’s Vanguard Officials wore specially made armor.

Although these players did not wear armor, they still had some mechanical equipment on them, such as firearms, melee weapons, shield generators, and other sorts.

The third type of player did not use armor, too. What they wore was the Nuclear Flying Backpack. It was clear they were all 'artists'.

In conclusion, all the players were using the Black Star Army's products. Their equipment had been updated from head to toe, and they all looked refreshed. Finally, these players looked somewhat like galactic warriors. However, in Han Xiao's eyes, they looked more like yards of green leeks.

Planet Sunil was the resource ground of NPCs. He had left 200,000 players to grow here for months, and they had stocked up a large amount of resources. Every single leek was looking fresh and nutritional.

Seeing that everyone was staring at him, Han Xiao coughed, put on a serious expression, and said in a low voice, "Due to your hard work, Sunil's troubles have been alleviated. However, a new obstacle has appeared in this mission, and we need more help. Hence, the original plan is being brought forward, and we will be building Base No. 3 on this planet as a stronghold.

"Phillip has sent the exact location to your communicators. Building a new base requires everyone's help..."

Han Xiao explained the situation briefly. The players had no problems with it. They followed him to the chosen location for the base and started to clear out the trees and flattening the terrain.

[Army Expansion—Base No. 3] was a faction mission; it included many construction jobs that needed the players to complete. Every sub-mission rewarded experience and Contribution Points. The players were very motivated, not only because of the reward but also because they were personally taking part in the construction of the base, contributing to the growth of the faction.

The addition of Base No. 3 was beneficial to them. A new base meant that the army would store much more resources there. By that time, the players would no longer have to pre-order faction products and could collect them directly at Base No. 3. Furthermore, as hire missions could only be accepted in the base, the players now had one more place where they could accept hires and rest, other than the Planet Aquamarine and Planet Golden Gate bases. This was the Black Star Army's new stronghold in the vast universe.

Han Xiao notified the galactical construction team that had been working with him from the beginning; they would arrive at Planet Sunil very soon. However, the construction teams could only build the buildings. The facilities still had to be completed by his own people. With 200,000 players, the construction speed of Base No. 3 would be tremendously increased.

The Noriosse and Rossozzi financial groups provided some help, too, and sent a large amount of supplies through their channels.

Han Xiao made a rough calculation. These two investors saved him about 600,000 Enas. This time, he planned to put in 2,700,000 Enas to build Base No. 3. His account had close to 50 million Enas saved up, so he could easily afford this expense.

One and a half years ago, he had only had the three to four million Enas that he had borrowed, and it had taken him more than half a year to build Base No.1. Less than two years later, his assets had multiplied more than ten times. It was a very remarkable increase.

The players were very efficient. Not long after, a huge, flat area appeared in the forest. As the construction materials that he had bought had yet to arrive, the players could not start working for the moment.

The tens of battleships that were on standby around Planet Sunil were all moved there, forming a temporary camp. Players were gathered there, as did Han Xiao.

Making use of this great opportunity, the players all approached Han Xiao, wanting to learn abilities. Most of them were Mechanics. After not seeing Han Xiao the Mechanic Mentor for a few months, they had all been looking forward to this moment.

This was exactly what Han Xiao had expected. He had planned long ago not to sell knowledge but blueprints this time.

He had a talent from his Scholar subclass—[Research Theory].

The effect of that talent was one bonus Intelligence point for every three abilities, which now gave Han Xiao about three hundred Intelligence points. This meant that Han Xiao now had close to a thousand blueprint abilities, which had cost him countless experience. This was an unimaginable number for the players.

Selling some low-level blueprints had a very limited effect on him. Han Xiao put up tens of low-level machinery blueprints at the same time.

The players were mostly above level 70. At this level, low-level blueprints were no longer rare; the players could fuse these themselves. However, due to the variety of knowledge combinations, hardly any Mechanic players could fuse the blueprints they wanted. Hence, the blueprints that they had were all very different.

He, however, sold blueprints directly, helping the players to escape the bottomless hole of gambling on blueprints.

Seeing so many blueprints, the Mechanic players' eyes were all sparking.

After working on Planet Sunil for a few months, those players were not short of experience. Although the blueprints that Han Xiao was selling did not involve very high-level technology, they covered all kinds of things. There were firearms, explosives, mechanical soldiers, shields, mechanical suits, energy sources, carriers, and many others. Gambling blueprints relied on luck. Therefore, every player could find useful blueprints for themselves and make up for their weak spots.

Han Xiao was not worried about Mechanic class players affecting the sales of the Black Star Army after learning those blueprints. From a cost perspective, the players definitely could not compete with production lines and had no chance of selling things at the same low price. Furthermore, spending in the faction store rewarded players with Contribution Points. Besides, Han Xiao did not sell blueprints of the faction products; what he sold were the blueprints of the same type of machines but half a standard lower.

Han Xiao's development plan also included partnering with material industries and selling players raw materials to make more money, expanding the Black Star Army's business range while at the same time bringing convenience to the players so that they could buy the materials that they needed in the faction store without having to collect them themselves.

Of the 200,000 players, there were about 50,000 to 60,000 Mechanic class players. They bought blueprints joyfully, and most of them bought more than one.

Han Xiao's experience quickly increased, shooting past the one billion mark, and continued to grow.

The players shockingly noticed that other than the low-level blueprints, there was also an extremely tempting high-level blueprint!

The Void Dragon Mechanical Suit!

"Thi—This is a god-tier blueprint!"

"Holy, now this is something!"

The Mechanic players were extremely tempted. Looking at the price—600,000 experience and 2,000 Enas—many felt a heartache. However, the impressive stats on the Void Dragon mechanical suit were like an erotic dancer in revealing clothing that kept telling the players, "Come and play."

In the eyes of the players, Void Dragon's stats were undoubtedly in the 'god tier' range. Some players that could afford it hesitated before clenching their teeth and buying it.

Seeing this, Han Xiao faintly smiled. Although this blueprint was high level, he had Berserk Ape now and had no use for Void Dragon anymore, so he sold it to the players.

The difficulty of making the Void Dragon mechanical suit was very high. The players would only be able to build it after level 90. Plus, its core material were Void Dragon bones; this was the most important factor to Han Xiao. Even if some players really built it, it would be impossible to replicate.

What, you want to build in bulk? Sure, go to Ames and ask to have her Floating Dragon. You should be able to experience what it's like to die from pressure.

Within one to two versions, the chance of a player being able to build it was very slim. They could at most look at it and feel good after they bought it. What if they wanted to build it? Not going to happen!

From the players' perspective, the mechanical suit blueprint that suited their current situation the most was actually Amphiptere, which Han Xiao had gotten rid of long ago.

With the Mechanic players' current ability, they would be able to build Amphiptere and keep its cost within an acceptable range. If he sold the Amphiptere blueprint, this Single Unit Mechanical Suit would quickly become popular among the players. The average combat capability of the players would be hugely increased... which was exactly why Han Xiao was not going to sell Amphiptere.

If the players got what was most suitable for them, how was he going to use the Sunil series armor to harvest those leeks time after time?

Thus, the Great Mechanic Han decided to sell the Void Dragon blueprint, giving the players a dream to chase. A man without a dream was no different from a fish, and this 'dream' just so happened to be able to earn him more profits.

Nonetheless, he did not scam the players too much. At the very least, the price of the Void Dragon blueprint was much lower than its value. Mechanical suit blueprints of this level could be sold for at least 100,000 Enas in the galaxy.

After this harvest, Han Xiao's experience rocketed once again, easily surpassing three billion. Han Xiao could not help but smile in satisfaction.

Maple Moon learned the Void Dragon blueprint, too. She quickly browsed through the materials and murmured, "Void Dragon Bone... Hmm, looks familiar... Isn't this Floating Dragon's specialty?"

As a player who had followed Han Xiao since Version 1.0, Maple Moon had visited Floating Dragon Island personally. She was the only Mechanic player present who had any idea what Void Dragon Bone was.

After about half a day, night came, and only then did the Mechanic players dissipate and return contentedly.

Han Xiao's experience stash had reached 9.4 billion!

The average price of low-level blueprints was about 40,000, and there were about 50,000 to 60,000 Mechanic players, each buying more than one blueprint on average. There were also a few thousand players that bought the Void Dragon blueprint. All in all, he had earned about 9.4 billion experience.

This is plenty. Han Xiao was rather satisfied. Exchanging some blueprints that he had no use for anymore for so much experience was worth it.

Since he had enough experience, Han Xiao did not delay. He returned to the training room on the spaceship, opened his interface, threw in three billion experience, and leveled up three times consecutively.

[Virtual Mechanic] leveled up to Lv.20 (max).

+350 Energy, +3 DEX, +3 END, +6 INT.

You have received 6 Free Attribute Points.

You have received 1 Potential Point.

Main Class level limit achieved. Complete Class Advancement requirements to continue leveling up.

Class Advancement requirements: INT > 1,300, Machinery Affinity > 580%. (Active ability bonus not included)

I got attribute requirements? Han Xiao's eyes sparkled.

Increasing attributes for regular players was quite complicated; it would usually be difficult for them to achieve the Class Advancement attribute requirements, and they would often have to learn subclasses.

However, to Han Xiao, this kind of Class Advancement was the easiest. The Class Advancement requirements were related to the nature of the class itself most of the time, such as the core attributes, Intelligence and Machinery Affinity. For these things, Han Xiao had always been well above the regular standard for his level.

For his Intelligence, his basic value reached 1,536 after spending all the Free Attribute Points that he had just earned on it, which was already above the Class Advancement requirements. Adding on the ten percent bonus as a Calamity Grade Super, as well as the more than three hundred Intelligence given by [Research Theory], his Intelligence was close to two thousand!

As for basic Machinery Affinity, including his talents and passive abilities, it was 686%, also exceeding the Class Advancement requirements.

This meant that Han Xiao had no need to learn any new subclasses. His attributes had already met the Class Advancement standard.

Huh, I've become lucky recently. Han Xiao rubbed his hands with excitement. *Could it be that the effect of touching Feidin is permanent?*

Since he met the requirements, without hesitation, Han Xiao put the experience in and leveled his main class up once more, completing his Class Advancement.

With the regular sharp pain in his head, he suddenly gained insight into many new things.

Class Advancement requirements completed!

You have received a new class [Galaxy Mechanic Lv.1].

+180 Energy, +1 STR, +3 DEX, +3 END, +8 INT.

You have received 6 Free Attribute Points.

You have received 1 Potential Point.

You have acquired ability [Master Machinery Affinity]!

You have acquired ability [Rapid Virtual Intrusion]!

You have acquired ability [Quantum Network Matrix]!

You have obtained talent [Machinery Theory Summary]!

Your talent [Virtual Technology Essence] is enhanced!

Your ability [Strengthened Smart Defense] is enhanced!

Your ability [Strengthened Hacking] is enhanced!

Chapter 619: Sunil's Grade A Main Storyline

As a [Galaxy Mechanic], Han Xiao had stepped into the advanced stage of a Mechanic. At this stage, he could already be considered a master. This stage increased the level limit of his main class by five, the maximum being Lv.25. As Han Xiao recalled, most of the Mechanic players in his previous life entered Grade A when they became Galaxy Mechanics.

The new class [Galaxy Mechanic] meant that he could build stronger machines that could now be used in galactic wars, machines that were more advanced and precise.

For example, Carroll was a Galaxy Mechanic, and the Giant Soldier, Ship Destroyer, was a blueprint that he invented at the Galaxy Mechanic stage.

From the players' perspective, the best improvement that this Class Advancement brought was related to fusing blueprints. The class [Galaxy Mechanic] was a prerequisite for more advanced blueprints. The same combinations as before could now unlock more blueprints.

In terms of abilities, [Galaxy Mechanic] strengthened the branch selected during the previous stage, which was Han Xiao's Virtual Technology. The related abilities and talents were enhanced, and he also obtained two new Virtual Technology abilities.

[Rapid Virtual Intrusion], as the name suggested, sped up the speed of Virtual Intrusion. In exchange, the duration of the authority obtained through Virtual Intrusion would become shorter.

[Quantum Network Matrix] was a core ability. It had two effects. One was a huge increase in the range of intrusion.

Range was a very important attribute of Virtual Technology. Clearly, there was an enormous difference between hacking something right in front of it and hacking something an entire Star System away. The quantum network existed everywhere, and the level of Virtual Technology determined the degree to which a Mechanic could make use of the quantum network. Han Xiao's range increased tremendously, but of course, it was still far from being able to use Virtual Intrusion across Star Systems.

Only Beyond Grade A Mechanics like [Mechanic Empire] Manison could do it across such terrifying distances, hacking from Star Systems or even Star Clusters away.

The second effect of this ability was the Virtual Intrusion version of 'splashing'.

For example, if the targets of the intrusion were two independent artificial intelligences but the two of them were exchanging data, if one artificial intelligence was hacked, through its data exchange with the other artificial intelligence, the other artificial intelligence would also be indirectly hacked. It was similar to computers spreading viruses, like an AOE Virtual Intrusion. However, the judging difficulty of indirect intrusion would be higher.

As for [Master Machinery Affinity], it was a very practical ability. It provided +75% Machinery Affinity at the max level.

[Machinery Theory Summary] was a talent. It was considered one of the core abilities of the Mechanic class just like [Machinery Analytical Comprehension]. It increased Machinery Affinity based on Intelligence at a rate of thirty Intelligence to 2.2% Machinery Affinity.

As the main class continued to level up, the core attribute of the class would have a bigger impact on his strength, which was why Han Xiao put all his points into Intelligence.

Level 146...

Han Xiao thought about it and did not continue levelling up. He maxed the levels of the new abilities and kept the remaining billions of experience.

Class Advancement was a new stage, which was why it made him much stronger, but the benefits of continuing to level up were not very high. Leveling up to 160 required an enormous amount of experience, and what he had was far from enough. It was better to keep it and use it to level up abilities, getting some Potential Points. What he was shortest of was Potential Points—they were in single digits.

Energized and refreshed, energy flowed in Han Xiao's body like a stream. Han Xiao could feel his body's changes clearly. His senses were clearer. He gently touched a compressed orb, and his brain subconsciously presented its structure. His understanding of machines was now deeper.

After enjoying this feeling for a while, Han Xiao left the training room satisfied. Only now did he see the message that Herlous had sent him, inviting him to attend the meeting before the battle, to discuss how to deal with the Subterranean Mutants together.

Han Xiao could not help but shake his head.

Sunils had hired the Black Star Army to get rid of the Subterranean Mutants, so they had most likely formulated a rough plan long ago. Instead of calling it a discussion, it was more like the Sunils introducing their plan.

...

Han Xiao went to the military conference room, and he could hear the heated argument even through the door. Han Xiao opened the door and walked in. Everyone looked at him, and the discussion suddenly stopped. The Sunil superiors all stood up to welcome him. Herlous and Sehrinde were there, too.

Han Xiao placed his fist in front of his mouth and coughed. "How's the discussion going?"

"Your Excellency Black Star, we are waiting for you to make the decision," a bold Sunil superior said respectfully. Han Xiao recalled that this superior was called Otis, the right-hand man of the Sunil leader. His position was very high.

"I'm just the executor, only responsible for carrying out the plan. The overall strategy is up to you, not decided by me." Han Xiao waved his hand. As a mercenary, he did not like to cross boundaries.

"Oh... okay. Then I shall talk about the strategic goal—eliminate Subterranean Mutants or shrink their number down to a safe standard, at least allowing us to safely destroy the Prophecy Stone mines underground. We now have three possible ways to deal with them..."

Otis turned on the projection and explained the plans in detail.

“The first plan is to send soldiers underground and destroy Subterranean Mutant’s nests one after another. This plan will need a lot of manpower, and the casualty number is difficult to estimate. The underground world is their stage; we can’t fully make use of our strength. We will also meet all sorts of difficulties like getting lost, being caved in, and so on. This is considered the last resort.

“Second, lure the Mutants up the surface in groups, then use war weapons such as spaceships and missiles to bombard them. This would be much more efficient, killing tens of millions at once. The problem is how we are going to lure them out. Also, it’s best not to use nuclear weapons. We don’t want to cause too much pollution.

“The last plan is to capture some Subterranean Mutants alive. Study their body structure, invent specially made bioweapons, and drop them underground. Eliminating them en masse without combat. However, the difficulty, cost, and time of inventing such a thing are all unknown. The level of uncertainty is too high.”

This time, Han Xiao’s interface suddenly popped up.

You have triggered Grade A Faction Mission [Eliminate Subterranean Mutants]!

Mission Introduction: An ancient species lives under Planet Sunil’s surface. They’re the natives of this planet, but they have become enemies that obstructed the Sunils’ development. You accepted Sunil’s request to completely resolve this hidden threat.

Reminder: This is a Faction Series Mission. You can complete the requirements stated below during this mission.

Research Sample I: Capture 1 Subterranean Mutant alive. Reward: 20,000 experience

Research Sample II: Capture 10 Subterranean Mutants alive. Reward: 200,000 experience

Research Sample III: Capture 50 Subterranean Mutants alive. Reward: 1,000,000 experience

Slaughterer I: Kill 10 Subterranean Mutants. Reward: 50,000 experience

...

Slaughterer V: Kill 1,000 Subterranean Mutants. Reward: 5,000,000 experience

Mine Destroyer (Repeatable): Destroy a Prophecy Stone mine. Reward: 200,000 experience

8 targets remaining... [Expand/Collapse]

When the mission ends, based on the number of targets completed, a rating and bonus reward will be given.

A new Grade A mission?

This appeared to be Planet Sunil's main storyline. When the plan officially started, the players would be able to trigger it as well.

Different planets all had their own main storyline missions, which was why Han Xiao always took NPC resources very seriously, using them to make up for the Black Star Army's 'storyline'. Not only were there missions, but there were also main storyline missions. Double the rewards, double the happiness.

The people stared at Han Xiao, and Herlous asked, "Black Star, which plan do we use?"

Han Xiao knocked on the table, pondered, and said, "All of them."

With joy written all over his face, Otis nodded rapidly and said, "That's the best. We Sunils will deploy soldiers as well to fight together with the Black Star Army."

After discussing the details of the plan, they agreed to first capture some Subterranean Mutants and study their bodies.

It was a task better done sooner, so Han Xiao did not waste any time. After the meeting ended, he took Herlous and Sehrinde in a spaceship, heading toward one of the Subterranean Mutant nests' entrances.

The three of them were strong enough to not worry about any danger, so it was most efficient for them to do the job. This was also why Han Xiao did not bring along any players. If not because the task of capturing them alive was more troublesome, he would rather have worked alone.

The spaceship arrived there very quickly. This place was in the middle of being dug up, so many drilling machines were scattered around the place. There was a huge hole in the ground, dark and extending to the underground.

This had initially been a cave for the Prophecy Stone mine underground, but it had become the first place to discover Subterranean Mutants. There were a lot of armored Sunil soldiers stationed there. Since they had very limited knowledge of the Subterranean Mutants, this was to prevent them from coming up to the surface.

The spaceship landed, and Han Xiao notified the camp commander. The commander welcomed the three of them, and the patrolling soldiers looked at them with respect.

It was late at night, and the sky was dark. The illuminating devices around the camp were the only sources of light. The three of them stood at the edge of the cave and looked down. Even the strong light could not reach the bottom.

Han Xiao was about to go down. This time, Herlous suddenly said, "Black Star, do you think this is... unethical?"

"Oh?" Han Xiao paused and turned to Herlous. "You mean eliminating the Subterranean Mutants?"

"Yes." Herlous' tone was anxious.

The appearance of Subterranean Mutants changed the nature of the issue. No one had expected to discover Planet Sunil's natives. The Sunils was outsiders. If they wanted to resolve the Catastrophe, they had to deal with these native Subterranean Mutants. In a way, this had become an invasion.

Without the Black Star Army's help, the Sunils would not have had the ability to deal with the Subterranean Mutants. They would have had no choice but to coexist with them in terror. Only with Black Star did the Sunil have confidence in eliminating them.

Comparing the power between the two sides, it was clear that as soon as the battle started, it would be a single-sided slaughter of the Subterranean Mutants.

Herlous was a Sunil, and he stood on the Sunils' side. Even if this was not very ethical, he had to do this for the future of his race, but Black Star was different.

Black Star's home, Planet Aquamarine, had once been invaded by DarkStar. Their situation was similar to that of the Subterranean Mutants, both victims of a higher civilization. Would Black Star stand on the Subterranean Mutants' side and be unhappy with the Sunils' actions?

Herlous was very worried about this and wanted to know what Han Xiao was thinking.

Chapter 620: Budding Civilization

Han Xiao looked into Herlous' eyes and saw nervousness and hesitation in them. It seemed like Herlous cared a lot about what he was going to say next.

Ever since Han Xiao became Calamity Grade, the Grade B officers had started to respect him more and more. He had known Herlous for many years and knew him well. Herlous had wasted many years before starting to help his race. Compared to these Sunil warriors who had been suffering for a long time, he was not as decisive and thought more about things.

In the previous life, Herlous had been willing to die while stopping the Catastrophe; he was very heroic. Now that his experiences were different, naturally, his mindset was different as well.

"You're overthinking it. There are no ethics or morals in the battle of survival, just different sides. If I don't help, the Sunils will be the ones that meet their end. Isn't this what you guys hired me to prevent?"

Han Xiao patted Herlous' shoulders and said, "Indeed, Sunils are outsiders, and the Subterranean Mutants are innocent. They've done nothing wrong. However, the rules of the jungle apply everywhere; the Subterranean Mutants are an obstacle to the survival of Sunil. Since you have no choice, don't empathize with your enemies..."

"I know that, but how are we different from DarkStar if we do this?" Herlous replied.

Sunil's mother planet had been invaded and destroyed by DarkStar; they were the victims. Now, they had become the invaders like DarkStar. Herlous did not know how to feel about this change of character.

"Sunil isn't DarkStar. DarkStar destroys for the sake of destroying, but you people are trying to ensure your race's future. The motives are different. This is a battle for survival between races. Since you Sunils can't migrate again, the only thing left to do is to eliminate your enemies. There's only the weak and strong, no wrong or wrong. Don't feel too guilty about it..."

Han Xiao paused and added, "If the Subterranean Mutants paid to hire me and told me to chase the Sunils away, I might be on their side. You wouldn't hope for me to chase away your race, would you?"

As a chaotic neutral and a professional mercenary, this was not an issue at all. He had no intention of interfering with Sunil's decisions.

Battles of survival happened every day around the universe. A large number of species were being killed every second while many were being born.

Han Xiao's attitude toward this made Herlous feel relieved. At least Black Star did not dislike him because of this.

"Stop chatting, let's start," Sehrinde said coldly and impatiently before jumping right into the cave.

Herlous sighed and jumped down, too.

Han Xiao activated Berserk Ape and followed behind.

...

The three of them descended for a while, and the cave entrance started to become hard to see. Their vision was filled with darkness, and there was not a single light source. Han Xiao turned on night vision.

About a few thousand meters underground, the three of them finally arrived at the bottom of the cave and stepped on solid ground.

In front of them was the pitch-black underground, the tunnels were twisted and complex. There were quite a few Prophecy Stone mines around there, which meant there were also many Subterranean Mutant nests. The Sunils had first discovered the Subterranean Mutants' existence when they drugged till here. They had lost some exploration teams, so the digging had been stopped.

There were only marks of mining near the cave—any areas further in were the world of Subterranean Mutants. It was enormous; just the discovered area was already much bigger than Forest City. The Subterranean Mutants had probably reproduced for many years to be able to build such a magnificent underground world.

The temperature this deep under the ground was very high and contained rich heat energy. Han Xiao opened the vital sign detection radar. On it, a nest far away was filled with dense dots. Each dot represented a Subterranean Mutant, so their numbers were terrifying. In just one nest, there were tens of millions of Subterranean Mutants.

Sunil numbered these nests. The one that they were going to was the nearest Nest No. 1.

This was just the tip of an iceberg of the underground world. With how large Planet Sunil was, there was still an unknown number of nests that they had yet to discover. There were hundreds of millions of Subterranean Mutants. They were undoubtedly the owner of this planet.

The nests spread out from the Prophecy Stone mines. The dots were most dense right around the nests, like a city center.

After following the radar for a while, the three of them got closer to the nest. The corrosive slime from the Subterranean Mutants started to appear on the ground and the walls. From years and years of the Subterranean Mutants living here, the slime had turned into a thick and rubber-like layer. It felt dense and tough to the touch.

Beep beep!

This time, the radar suddenly rang. More than ten Mutants passed by in front of them. Han Xiao turned on the binoculars and locked onto the Mutants.

With one acceleration, Han Xiao instantly closed in on them. His movements left a series of afterimages, and in the blink of an eye, all the Mutants were beaten to the ground. In the face of Han Xiao's Calamity Grade strength, the battle was completely one-sided.

Herlous and Sehrinde approached and secured the Mutants. Their mission was just labor work.

The Subterranean Mutants were more than one meter long, and they had certain characteristics of insect species. Their carapace protected their muscles, and hair extended from the gaps in between their carapace, secreting slime from the inside. Their head was very small, and they had yet to develop eyes, only four agile antennae on their head. Their mouth was filled with sharp teeth to aid them in consuming rocks. They had four very lean legs with backward joints, allowing them to sprint and jump. They had a spine and a tough tail covered in carapace with a shovel-shaped end. Their overall appearance was rather vicious.

"We've caught the samples. Shall we return now?" Herlous asked softly.

"You guys go first, I'm going deeper into the nest to take a look." Han Xiao waved. The two of them did not object; they had no reason to worry about Han Xiao, given how strong he was. They took the ten or so Subterranean Mutants and returned the way they came from.

Han Xiao was the only one left. He looked at the battle information from earlier, and the attributes of the Subterranean Mutants popped up. Their total level was about thirty to forty, and they were beast type beings. They all had the Psychic Resistance talents. Other than that, there was nothing special.

Their psychic resistance is quite high indeed; they won't be affected by the Prophecy Stones. Han Xiao nodded. Now, he had to find out the reason these Subterranean Mutants lived near the Prophecy Stones.

Activating the stealth function, Han Xiao moved deeper into the nest. He started to meet Subterranean Mutants more and more frequently. However, Berserk Ape's stealth function was definitely not something that the Subterranean Mutants could discover. It was a smooth journey.

The closer he got to the center of the nest, the bigger the Subterranean Mutants got. From over one meter long to more than four meters long, their carapace was also thicker.

Han Xiao suddenly realized that there were some skew slash marks on one of the stone walls that formed images with unknown meanings. He looked at it carefully and confirmed this was a drawing made by Subterranean Mutants using their tails.

"Is this a type of recording? The Subterranean Mutants' language?"

The creation of words usually meant that civilization was sprouting.

Are the Subterranean Mutants in the transition from beasts to an intelligent species?

This thought flashed past, and Han Xiao continued forward. Very soon, he came to a Prophecy Stone mine. He noticed that there were not any signs that it had been mined before, as if the Subterranean Mutants had never used the Prophecy Stones, only guarding the mine.

Do the Subterranean Mutants just like the radiation from the Prophecy Stones? Han Xiao was curious. Suddenly, he thought of destroying a part of the mine so that he could test what the Subterranean Mutants' reaction would be.

Han Xiao deactivated his stealth mode, took out the Watcher Instrument, and ruthlessly bombarded this small mine.

Boom!

The explosions made this part of the tunnel tremble.

The next moment, the radar showed that the Subterranean Mutants in the entire nest were gathering toward this place as if they had gone crazy.

The Subterranean Mutants sprinted over from all directions. Han Xiao casually set the Watcher Instrument into explosive attacks and free fire mode. Beams of light exploded within the beasts as its power easily tore many Subterranean Mutants apart.

The Subterranean Mutants came nonstop, but not even one could get close to Han Xiao without turning into shattered meat and becoming a part of the carcass pile that kept growing taller. Han Xiao strolled about casually. The huge difference in strength made the Subterranean Mutants' advantage in numbers meaningless.

Although there was no danger, this phenomenon made Han Xiao realize one thing.

Why is that when I caused damage to the Prophecy Stone mine, this entire nest went haywire and they all came toward me?

This feels like the reaction a being will have when its weakness is attacked... Han Xiao started to speculate.

This meant that this nest had a collective mind. Maybe their communication method was psychic waves and there was a psychic network around the nest. The Prophecy Stones then happened to possess psychic radiation, which had affected these Subterranean Mutants for many years, causing their psychic abilities to evolve. Maybe the Subterranean Mutants were using the Prophecy Stones to maintain their psychic network.

Therefore, the Subterranean Mutants were using the Prophecy Stone mines as tools. It was a 'communication base station' for them!

That would explain why the Subterranean Mutants had set up their nests around the Prophecy Stone mines, or tribes might be a more suitable term. One mine could only be used by one Subterranean Mutant tribe, each tribe had no connection to the others, and the Prophecy Stone mines could be considered a part of these Subterranean Mutants.

This type of race specialty... why is it somewhat similar to the World Tree Civilization?

Suddenly, Han Xiao felt slight dizziness. Notifications popped up on his interface continuously like he was being spammed.

You have received a psychic attack. Due to the high difference in level, you are immune to its damage. Judging debuff... passed. You are immune to the [Confused] status!

Psychic attack? Han Xiao was shocked. He quickly looked at the battle information and noticed that the usual Subterranean Mutants did not have this ability, but these three- to four-meter elite Mutants all had the [Psychic Confusion] ability.

The level difference was too large. Plus, Han Xiao had [Advanced Psychological Resistance]. Most of the psychic attacks from the elite Mutants had no effect on him, but there were also very few of them that did pass the judgment out of luck and disrupted his mind.

Han Xiao became alert. Psychic attacks were a counter to his mana to health cycle. He did not remain in place anymore. The Berserk Ape activated in an instant and turned into a stream of black light, opening a bloody path in the wave of beasts.

Going back the way he had come and arriving at the cave entrance, he killed thousands of Subterranean Mutants in a short period. As long as Han Xiao had enough time, slaughtering all the Subterranean Mutants would be a piece of cake to him. However, the level difference was too huge; killing one Subterranean Mutant only gave one experience point. Even if he killed ten million Subterranean Mutants by himself, it would only give him the same number in experience. It was far from harvesting his leeks.

However, to the players, killing was a path to leveling up fast. There were players who did exactly that in Han Xiao's previous life. In the end, they were wanted by countless organizations and used up all their revives every single day. These were even more fearless than the Great Mechanic Han.

Having collected quite an amount of intelligence, Han Xiao went out of the cave and returned to the surface. As soon as he came up, he saw Herlous and Sehrinde waiting for him. The ten or so Mutants that had been captured alive were all in cages and secured.

"Black Star, what did you discover?" Herlous smelled blood.

"Hmm, quite a lot of interesting information. We'll talk when we get back."

The three of them boarded the spaceship and returned to Forest City. The Sunil Research Department was already waiting. They smoothly handed over the Subterranean Mutants that they had captured.

Han Xiao shared his discoveries with the Sunil Research Department, regarding signs of Subterranean Mutants becoming a civilization, the use of the Prophecy Stone mines, and so on.

He easily completed many small goals from the Sunil Main Storyline missions. All the goals under 'Slaughterer' were completed, which gave him a few million experience. The Mission Rating increased visibly, too.

Next, he needed to wait for the Sunil Research Department to finish their study on the Subterranean Mutants, as well as wait for the galactic construction team to arrive and build Base No. 3. After these two things were done, the elimination of Subterranean Mutants would officially start.

...

Right after Han Xiao left, the Subterranean Mutants in Nest No. 1 collected all the carcasses and piled them up together. It was very bloody. If a normal person saw this, they would most likely vomit.

Countless Subterranean Mutants waved their antennae as if they were communicating silently.

After quite some time, all the Subterranean Mutants seemed to have come to an agreement. They all gathered around the mine area and lowered their bodies as if they were worshipping the mine, similar to worshipping ancient totems.

Right after that, all the Subterranean Mutants suddenly started to use their shovel-shaped tails to mine the Prophecy Stones, digging them up, and piled them together under tight protection.

A few hundred Subterranean Mutants wanted to eat the Prophecy Stones but were attacked by the others and quickly bitten to death.

The Subterranean Mutants dug very quickly. With their large numbers, not long after, the huge mine was entirely harvested. All the Prophecy Stones were dug out.

The tall, elite Subterranean Mutants moved the large Prophecy Stones and formed an enormous group, protected by countless other Subterranean Mutants that surrounded them. Then, this Subterranean Mutant tribe with tens of millions of members gave up their original nest and moved to further away.

During that, there were some that took a bite at the Prophecy Stones. Like the others, they were killed. Their bodies were torn apart, and the Prophecy Stones were dug out from their stomachs to continue to be transported.

This Subterranean Mutant tribe started to migrate, going further away from the nest that Han Xiao and the others had entered.